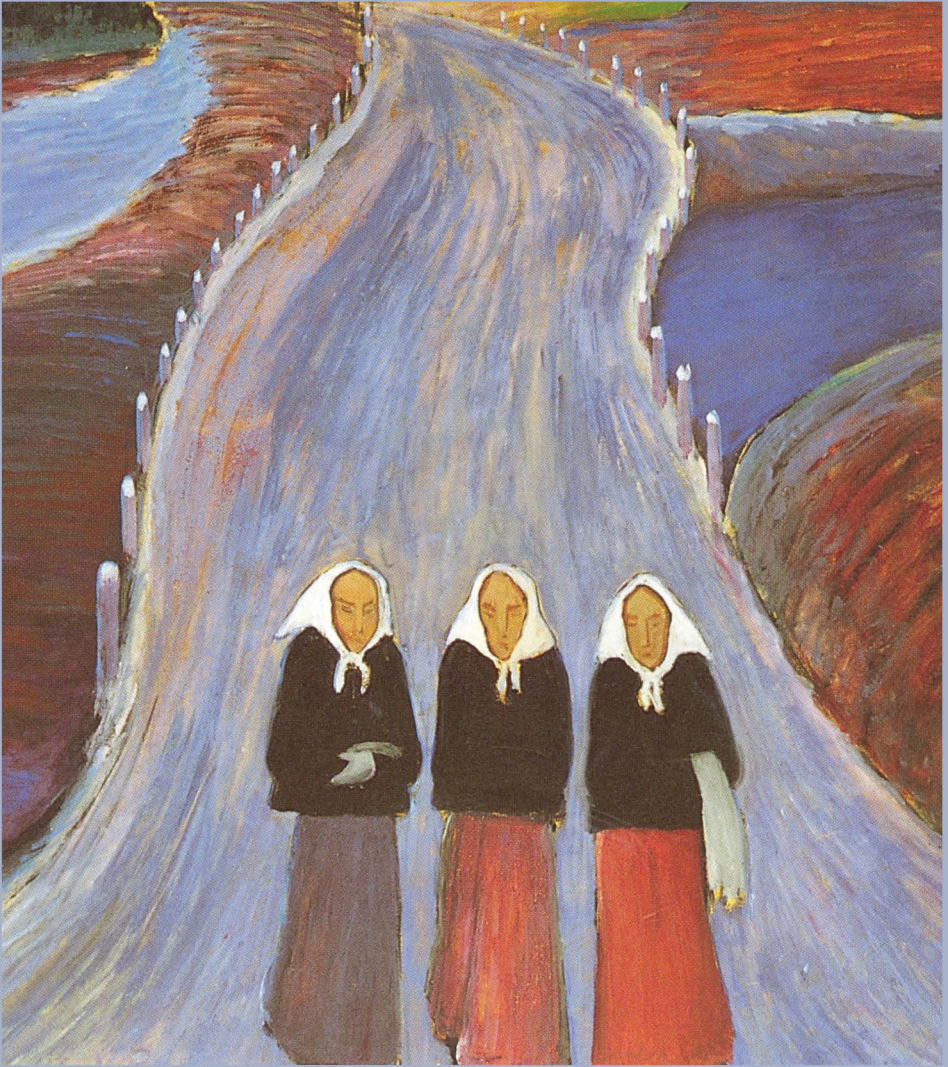


— AVANTGARDE —
CRITICAL STUDIES



MARIANNE WEREFKIN
AND THE WOMEN ARTISTS IN HER CIRCLE

Edited by Tanja Malycheva and
Isabel Wünsche

BRILL | RODOPI

Marianne Werefkin and the Women Artists in Her Circle

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Tanja Malycheva & Isabel Wünsche
Berlin, May 2016

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Introduction

Tanja Malycheva and Isabel Wünsche

Recent decades have seen the publication of a number of individual studies on the work of modernist and avant-garde women artists, among them Sonia Delaunay, Natalia Goncharova, Gabriele Münter, and Lyubov Popova, as well as more general volumes on women artists. Even though the quality of these studies is often outstanding, they are generally limited in their scope, either geographically or in their focus on a single national cultural orientation, or else they focus on a specific teacher-student lineage. For example, the 1997 volume *Garten der Frauen. Wegbereiterinnen der Moderne in Deutschland, 1900–1914* (Women's Garden: Female Pioneers of Modernity in Germany, 1900–1914), edited by Ulrich Krempel and Suzanne Meyer-Büser, and Marsha Meskimmon's 1999 book *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, are both excellent studies that address women artists active in Germany. *Amazons of the Avant-garde* (2000), edited by John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt, and Ada Raev's 2002 monograph *Russische Künstlerinnen der Moderne: 1870–1930* (Modern Russian Women Artists: 1870–1930) are the most extensive publications on Russian women artists in recent years. The 2005 anthology *Between Union and Liberation*, edited by Marion Arnold and Brenda Schmahmann, focuses on women artists in South Africa from the Union of British Colonies in 1910 to the end of apartheid in 1994; the 2005 anthology *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910–1945*, edited by Marian Wardle, examines American women artists who studied under the influential American painter Robert Henri.

Other important studies take a broader approach, for example: *Women Artists and Modernism* (1998), edited by Katy Deepwell, features artists from various cultural backgrounds, and *A World of Our Own: Women As Artists Since the Renaissance* (2000), by Frances Borzello, addresses modernist artists as one part in a wide-ranging survey of influential women artists from various epochs. Publications such as *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art* (2010), by Cornelia H. Butler and Esther Adler, present the women artists of a single museum collection.

In contrast to these efforts, worthy in their own right, our book focuses on the artistic exchanges and network interactions between Marianne Werefkin and other women artists of various nationalities who were active in her circle of associates and fellow artists. During the period this book addresses, 1890 to 1918, artists throughout Europe were active in an unprecedented number of

collectives, associations, and exhibition societies—both large and small, formal and informal. Competitive in nature and keenly aware of the other organizations' existence, these groups were well skilled at profiting from available opportunities and fully conscious of their own position and standing within the European art system. They organized exhibitions, participated in international events, collaborated and competed with each other and also more traditional (non-modernist) organizations, operated their own venues, and often published their own journals, pamphlets, books, and print portfolios. In the process, they profoundly shaped the cultural landscape of Europe by providing a discursive and institutional identity for the emerging modern art. Women artists largely enjoyed de jure equality as members in many of the newly established modernist artists' groups, but in contrast to their male colleagues, they generally had to overcome additional societal, cultural, and gender barriers in order to work and be recognized as artists. Thus, in their efforts to promote themselves and better develop their relationships with other artists, women artists actively pursued and built up their own social as well as professional networks based on their art and friendships. The analysis of these individual connections through personal relationships, shared exhibitions, and group memberships demonstrates the significance of networking opportunities as a focal point of female empowerment and gender consciousness long before the feminist art movement of the 1960s.

The Russian-born artist Marianne Werefkin (1860–1938) is a prime example of the cosmopolitan artist and facilitator of an extended artistic network and one of the most prominent examples of the modernist female artist whose achievements have previously been marginalized and neglected by curators and art historians. As a society woman and patron of the arts, she was once viewed largely as Alexei Jawlensky's benefactor and hostess of an artistic salon in Munich. Today, Werefkin the painter is widely recognized for her influential role in important artists' associations such as the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich), *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), and *Der Große Bär* (The Great Bear). Most of the other female artists in her circle, however, remain less known, even though a number of recent exhibitions and publications have been devoted to the artistic achievements of modernist women artists. The 2014 exhibition *Marianne Werefkin: Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), held at the Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen and at the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum in Bremen, thus provided an ideal context for a closer look at Marianne Werefkin and the cosmopolitan women artists in her circle.

The collection of essays in this book is the result of new research and an intense scholarly exchange. Included are discussions of the relationships between the modernist women artists, poets, writers, and patrons in Werefkin's circle: Erma Bossi, Elisabeth Epstein, Natalia Goncharova, Elizaveta Kruglikova, Else Lasker-Schüler, Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Maria Marc, Gabriele Münter, and others. Like Werefkin, all were well educated, creative, and artistically productive; their work was shown in national and international exhibitions during their lifetime or influenced artistic practice. Like Werefkin, many of the artists dared to cross geographical, societal, cultural, and artistic borders: they visited foreign cities, lived abroad, remained single (or in a common-law marriage), and, finally, challenged the idea of the superiority of the male genius.

The book details the networks of women artists that gathered around Werefkin and demonstrates that their interaction was not primarily dominated by national ties, but rather by their artistic ideas, intellectual convictions, and gender roles. By focusing on themes of cosmopolitan culture, transcultural dialogue, and gender issues in European modernism, and by considering changes in geographical location as foundations for building new artistic networks, our collection of essays traces the relationships among these artists and re-evaluates their roles in the development of modern art. In contrast to other publications in this field, the book is not a general survey of the modernist women artists active in the first half of the twentieth century, but focuses instead on the *networked interactions* of the women artists in Werefkin's circle and their contributions to European modernism. In lieu of a more mainstream methodological approach based on cultural nationalism, we strive towards a more universal and cosmopolitan perspective on the development of European modernism.

The book is distinctive in that it is a first study of the greater network of the women artists linked to Werefkin. The essays not only trace their biographies and artistic developments but also address their sense of self and their innovations in artistic production and performative practice, thus underlining their roles as architects and practitioners of modernism. Furthermore, the book offers an analysis of the various artistic scenes, the places of exchange, and the artists' sources of inspiration. Structurally the book does not follow a chronological order, which would force a progressive, "history of art"-type quasi-narrative; instead it focuses on thematic issues that trace the networked interaction of the artists and their interactions with Werefkin. Altogether, the book reveals that Werefkin served as the crucial "interface" among the artists and thus played a significant role in the emancipation of modernist women artists and the development of European modernism.

The introductory essays by Bernd Fäthke and Petra Lanfermann trace the scholarly discourse and exhibition history of Marianne Werefkin and her contemporaries respectively. In his essay, Fäthke recounts the long path to a restoration of Marianne Werefkin's reputation as a modernist artist. Despite many obstacles, institutional and otherwise, he was able to organize a Werefkin travel exhibition in 1980 and publish the first comprehensive volume on her work in 1988. With his many years' expertise as a Werefkin scholar, Fäthke was instrumental in supporting the 2014 exhibition, conference, and publication. Petra Lanfermann, co-curator of the exhibition, outlines in her essay the concept of the exhibition: to create a dialogue between the works of Werefkin and those of fellow women artists in her circle. Lanfermann furthermore introduces the artists' organization *Der Große Bär* (The Great Bear), founded at Werefkin's initiative in Ascona in 1924, and discusses two important themes in the artist's oeuvre: leisure activities and working people.

The book is divided into two sections, with the first two parts highlighting the cultural environs and artistic influences surrounding Marianne Werefkin before and during World War I. This includes the themes of cosmopolitan culture, transcultural dialogue, gender relations, and changes in geographical location and cultural environment. Part 1, "Germany and Switzerland as Places of Exchange and Inspiration," focuses first on the inspiration Werefkin derived from her summer stays on the Baltic Sea and then the personal networks she formed while in involuntary exile in Switzerland during World War I. The essays in the second part, "Crossing National, Cultural, and Gender Borders," focuses on the various strategies Werefkin and the women artists in her circle relied on to overcome national, cultural, and gender barriers.

In the first essay of Part 1, Kornelia Röder and Antonia Napp examine in detail Werefkin's Baltic Sea sketchbook and the significance of the 1911 drawings and paintings she produced in Prerow, Ahrenshoop, and Zingst. It was at this most removed, peripheral location on the rural coast of the Baltic Sea that Werefkin found the focal point and essence of her own expressionistic approach to art.

In the subsequent essay, Isabel Wünsche sheds new light on the émigré artists' circles active in Switzerland during World War I by highlighting Werefkin's relationships to other women artists during the period, among them the performer and poet Emmy Hennings, the writer and journalist Claire Goll, the dancer and artist Sophie Taeuber, and the dancer Clotilde von Derp, as well as Hilla Rebay and Emmy Scheyer—themselves artists, too, but more importantly future promoters and patrons of modernist art in the United States.

Tanja Malycheva, in her essay that opens Part 2, emphasizes Werefkin's drive to question societal rules and neglect gender roles but also her constant

longing for knowledge and compares her cultural background and artistic interests to those of Valentin Serov. Both artists promoted a cosmopolitan worldview, i.e. the conscious sense of belonging to a number of cultures and artistic traditions, as well as the primacy of a modernist aesthetic over national affiliations. This cosmopolitan approach also united the women artists in Werefkin's circle and was a constituent aspect of their modernist thinking.

Drawing on the letters of Marianne Werefkin archived at the National Martynas Mažvydas Library in Vilnius, Laima Surgailienė-Laučkaitė highlights the multi-lingual and multi-cultural milieu of Vilnius and Lublin, the two cities where Werefkin spent the first 22 years of her life. She examines in particular the formative and competitive relationship between Vera Abegg-Werefkine and Werefkin, both of whom were students of Ilya Repin and competing for his approval.

Looking at the interaction between Marianne Werefkin and Else Lasker-Schüler and exploring the complex notions of gendered authorship and agency, Shulamith Behr discusses how the image of Werefkin's persona as "*Reiterin*" attracted a cohort of creative women. Behr highlights the group's significant contribution to the field of pre-emancipation sexual and cultural politics, i.e. the form of metonymic and performative interplay between the masculine and feminine signals, an issue still in need of further study.

Comparing the work of Paula Modersohn-Becker, Käthe Kollwitz, Gabriele Münter, and Marianne Werefkin, Dorothy Price analyzes cultural expectations of the period with respect to societal views on creativity, procreation, and female identity. She notes the pressures of the domestic realm that women faced—procreation rather than artistic creation—and how these experiences influenced the work of all four artists.

In the final essay of Section 1, Marina Dmitrieva examines cross-dressing as a performative practice of women artists of the avant-garde. Looking at the self-representations of Natalia Goncharova, Zinaida Gippius, Elisaveta Kruglikova, Elsa Lasker-Schüler, and Marianne Werefkin, she highlights cross-dressing as a way to overcome gender stereotypes and promote a creative individuality that would otherwise not be acceptable in a woman.

The second section of the book is devoted to the artistic oeuvre of women artists in Marianne Werefkin's circle, including Erma Bossi, Elisabeth Epstein, Maria Marc, and Elena Luksch-Makowsky, and representatives of Russian and Latvian modernism with whom Werefkin was connected, among them Natalia Goncharova, Elizaveta Kruglikova, Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Aleksandra Beļcova, and Marta Liepiņa-Skulme. Like Werefkin, these artists often found themselves in a position of difficulty in an art world dominated by men—a situation reflected in their lack of name recognition today. The essays trace the

artists' individual relationships and associations and re-evaluate their roles in the development of European modernism.

Carla Pellegrini Rocca, in her contribution on Erma Bossi's mysterious life, provides a comprehensive account of this almost forgotten artist and her work that reaches from Bossi's childhood and youth in the multicultural milieu of Trieste and her art studies in Munich along with her involvement in the New Artists' Association Munich to her time in Paris during World War I and her return in 1918 to Italy, where she settled in Milan. Rocca traces Bossi's artistic development and identifies a number of her paintings, the majority of which are thought to be lost.

Maria Marc is best known as the wife of Franz Marc and keeper of his estate. Kimberly A. Smith sheds new light on the role of Maria Marc as mediator and facilitator and her extensive correspondence with a growing network of artists, art dealers, publishers, and other cultural producers. Through her examination of Maria Marc's writing, Smith highlights Marc's role in the development of Expressionism and the history of German modernism.

Hildegard Reinhardt's contribution is devoted to Elisabeth Epstein, an artist who has remained a peripheral figure despite her crucial role as a mediator of the French-German cultural transfer. Living in Munich after 1898, Epstein studied with Anton Ažbe, Kandinsky, and Jawlensky and participated in Werefkin's salon. She had already begun exhibiting her work in Paris in 1906, and after her move there in 1908 she became the main facilitator of the artistic exchange between the Blue Rider artists (Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and August Macke) and Sonia and Robert Delaunay. In the 1920s and 1930s she was active both in Geneva and Paris.

Simone Ewald looks at the unfulfilled artistic potential of Elena Luksch-Makowsky. As the daughter of the famous Russian Salon artist Konstantin Makovsky, Luksch-Makowsky received a thorough artistic education in St. Petersburg, Munich, and Vienna; between 1900 and 1908 she successfully exhibited with the Vienna Secession and worked for the Vienna Workshops. Her development as an artist, however, was limited by her three pregnancies, the family's move to Hamburg, her divorce and the subsequent burden of having to raise the children on her own.

The exceptional role of Natalia Goncharova in Russian avant-garde art is highlighted by Olga Furman. In her essay, she places Goncharova at the crossroads of inspiring muse and artistic innovator, as an artist who connected Russian modernism to its native sources in folk art and icon painting, positioned it between East and West, and promoted a new aesthetic.

Examining the work of the artists Elizaveta Kruglikova and Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Galina Mardilovich reveals how the printed medium

served as a means to promote the professional, practical, and personal relationships of these two artists and demonstrates the importance of new innovative practices in printmaking for the development of modernism in the Russian arts.

Baiba Vanaga's contribution focuses on the situation of early modernist women artists in Latvia, among them Milda Grīnfelde, Otilija Leščinska, Lūcija Kuršinska, Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, and Aleksandra Beļcova, and their artistic developments and involvements in the international art scene. The absence of well-established art schools forced these young artists to study abroad, often in St. Petersburg but also in cities such as Dresden, Munich, and Paris. Most of them—with the exception of Beļcova and Liepiņa-Skulme, who became involved with *L'Esprit Nouveau* in the 1920s—were not able to sustain their promising early careers, however, and soon returned home to Latvia and a family life.

Many of the women artists discussed in the book are still relatively unknown; we hope that the publication will serve as a starting point and basis for further research on lesser-known women artists such as Erma Bossi, Elisabeth Epstein, Elizaveta Kruglikova, and Elena Luksch-Makowsky, and thus be of interest to students in art history, cultural history, Slavic and German studies, and gender studies at all levels as well as an international audience of scholars and museum experts.

Marianne Werefkin: Clemens Weiler's Legacy

Bernd Fäthke

Abstract

Russian-born artist Marianne Werefkin was long recognized solely for her roles as socialite and arts patron, her artistic salon in Munich, and as Alexei Jawlensky's benefactor. This introductory essay recounts the author's long path to a restoration of Werefkin's reputation as a modernist artist and active member of the Blaue Reiter. Despite many obstacles, institutional and otherwise, Fäthke, with the support of Clemens Weiler, succeeded in organizing a Werefkin travel exhibition in 1980 and published the first comprehensive volume on her work in 1988.

This acquaintance [with Werefkin] would change my life. I became a friend of hers, of this clever woman gifted with genius.¹

ALEXEI JAWLENSKY in his memoirs, 1936/41



I heard the name Marianne Werefkin for the first time in 1969, from Clemens Weiler (1909–1982),² the director of the Museum Wiesbaden and the first biographer of Alexei Jawlensky (1864/65–1941).³ During my semester break that year, I took a job at the picture gallery of the museum, which was still run by the city at the time. I was studying art history, archaeology, and prehistory at the University of Mainz. Weiler presented Werefkin to me as an artist who had substantially influenced the group *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), and he

1 Alexej Jawlensky, "Lebenserinnerungen" (Memories), in *Alexej Jawlensky. Köpfe-Gesichte-Meditationen* (Alexei Jawlensky: Heads-Faces-Meditations), ed. Clemens Weiler (Hanau: H. Peters, 1970), 106.

2 K. Fischer, "Jawlensky aus dem Nichts. Museum. Einstiger Direktor Weiler wäre dieses Jahr 100 geworden / Erinnerungen der Tochter" (Jawlensky from nothing. Museum. Former director Weiler would have been 100 this year / memories of his daughter), *Wiesbadener Kurier* (Wiesbaden Messenger), October 2, 2009, 18.

3 Clemens Weiler, "Alexej von Jawlensky. Der Maler und Mensch" (Alexei Jawlensky: The painter and man) (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1955); –, *Alexej Jawlensky* (Cologne: DuMont, 1959).

tried to get me interested in Werefkin as a subject for my doctoral dissertation. I reacted by expressing a biased opinion about women's art, of the kind that generally prevailed in art history departments back then: occupying myself with Angelika Kauffmann, Paula Modersohn-Becker, or Käthe Kollwitz might perhaps have been conceivable, but a Russian woman who was unknown in Germany—out of the question! And on top of that, as I made clear to Weiler, I was greatly enjoying my work of stylistic analysis on the master of the Klosterneuburg Altar, the goldsmith Nicholas of Verdun, and I was already far along with it.

Weiler's publications on Werefkin were the only things readily available in the museum's library.⁴ Of her paintings in the Museum Wiesbaden, I was impressed by the *Schindelfabrik* (Shingle Factory, fig. 1.1), for which she had made sketches in Upper Bavaria's Oberau in 1910.⁵ The relatively large painting stuck in my memory during the years that followed not just because the artist had dealt with an iconographical feature that had previously been unknown to me—an unusual type of confrontation between a person depicted in the image and the viewer, namely, a worker sticking his tongue out at the person opposite him. This, as well as other things, kept me from forgetting Werefkin entirely during the following years. Werefkin's way of painting struck me as equally remarkable: She combined elements as diverse as those from Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Edvard Munch. At the same time, however, her painting astonishingly also displayed cold characteristics, which seemed to establish links to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). I had never seen painting like that before.

Weiler was still living in Wiesbaden in retirement when, in 1973, his successor Ulrich Schmidt offered me a position as curator at the picture gallery of the Museum Wiesbaden, for which the state of Hessen had since assumed responsibility. When Weiler heard that I had once again ended up at the Museum Wiesbaden, after working as a prehistorian at the Celtic excavation

4 Clemens Weiler, "Marianne von Werefkin," in *Marianne Werefkin 1860–1938*, exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Städtisches Museum; Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1958), no page nos; Clemens Weiler, ed., *Marianne Werefkin. Briefe an einen Unbekannten 1901–1905* (Marianne Werefkin: Letters to an unknown 1901–1905) (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1960).

5 Roman Zieglgänsberger, ed., *Horizont Jawlensky 1900–1914. Alexej von Jawlensky im Spiegel seiner Begegnungen* (Horizont Jawlensky 1900–1914: Alexei Jawlensky in the mirror of his encounters), exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Städtisches Museum; Munich: Hirmer 2014), cat. 137, ill. on p. 269. In asserting that the painting depicts a factory in Oberstdorf, the author uncritically follows Volker Rattemeyer, ed., *Das Geistige in der Kunst. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Abstrakten Expressionismus* (The Spiritual in Art: From the Blue Rider to Abstract Expressionism), exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Städtisches Museum, 2010), 89.



FIGURE 1.1 *Marianne Werefkin, Shingle Factory, 1910, tempera on cardboard, 105 × 80 cm*
MUSEUM WIESBADEN

site in Manching, Bavaria, he came to visit me at the museum and reminded me about Werefkin. It was only then that I was able to develop a genuine interest in this artist, and Weiler then offered me his support. In this context, a 1975 trip with Weiler to Villingen-Schwenningen for the opening of the exhibition *Der Blaue Reiter und sein Kreis* (The Blue Rider and its circle) became important:

There, he introduced me to collectors, gallerists, and various museum people.⁶ The Ascona gallerist Trudi Neuburg-Coray (1907–1986) was very pleased when she learned that I would now be writing and doing research on Werefkin. She immediately assured me of her assistance, as did Felix Klee (1907–1990). My meeting with Andreas Jawlensky (1902–1984) went very differently. When Weiler introduced me to him and revealed that I was developing a publication on Werefkin, he looked at us angrily. He agitatedly tried to convince me that Werefkin was not worth writing about. She had occasionally shown up in his father's studio and had him teach her the basics of painting. The sudden emergence of this antagonistic atmosphere informed me that this descendant of Jawlensky bore a feeling of exceptional antipathy towards Werefkin. Down to the present day, his heirs have continued in this vein by repeatedly trying to obscure Werefkin's achievements and her significance for Jawlensky and for the history of art and downplaying her importance through inaccurate assertions.

The most recent example of this is the statement that, when Jawlensky left the military at the age of 31/32, his pension was so large that it would have been sufficient to support himself, his lover Helene, and their son Andreas. This portrayal is intended to suggest that Jawlensky was not financially dependent upon Werefkin,⁷ as though the "financial means necessary for the untroubled life of an artist"⁸ had been available to him.⁹ In fact, however, Jawlensky's pension was "simply miserable."¹⁰ Letters written by Wassily Kandinsky to Herwarth Walden in January and February of 1914 already provide information about the situation, namely, that while Werefkin was away from Munich, Jawlensky got into precarious financial problems.¹¹

6 *Der Blaue Reiter und sein Kreis. Der Blaue Reiter und die Neue Künstlervereinigung München. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Graphik* (The Blue Rider and its circle. The Blue Rider and the New Artists' Association Munich. Paintings, watercolors, drawings, graphic works) (Villingen-Schwenningen 1975). The exhibition dates given in the catalogue raisonné of Jawlensky's paintings are inconsistent with those of this catalogue, see Maria Jawlensky, Lucia Pieroni-Jawlensky, and Angelica Jawlensky, eds., *Alexej von Jawlensky: Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, vol. 1 (Munich: Tauris I B, 1991), 512.

7 Brigitte Roßbeck, *Marianne von Werefkin. Die Russin aus dem Kreis des Blauen Reiters* (Marianne Werefkin: A Russian woman in the circle of the Blue Rider) (Munich: Siedler, 2010), 45.

8 Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, *Erinnerungen an August Macke* (Memories of August Macke) (Frankfurt Main: Fischer, 1987), 240.

9 Angelica Jawlensky Bianconi, "Alexej von Jawlensky. Momente eines gelebten Lebens, 1864 bis 1914" (Alexei Jawlensky: Moments of a Life, 1864 to 1914), in *Horizont Jawlensky 1900–1914*, 281.

10 Roßbeck, *Marianne von Werefkin*, 49.

11 Bernd Fäthke, "Marianne Werefkin—'des blauen Reiterreiterin'" (Marianne Werefkin—the Amazon of the Blue Rider), in *Marianne Werefkin. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen*

After meeting people in Villingen-Schwenningen, Weiler organized a research project for me with the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin in Ascona. At that time, I was not yet able to recognize that this represented a deliberate affront against Andreas Jawlensky and, particularly, against Weiler's successor in office. When his successor, who was my boss at that time, heard about the research project and received the official documentation from the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, he literally declared: "Research is forbidden at Hessian museums!"¹² At that point, however, that was no longer enough to bother me: For me, in the meantime, Werefkin had become such a sufficiently fascinating figure of avant-garde modern art that I did not want to give her up. In administrative terms, the research project in question was one "without approval required," but through a ministerial decree, with "notification required." Thus, it was totally inadequate that only after months of opposition by the head of the institution it would be officially filed by the administrative officer of the Museum Wiesbaden.

In February of 1978, having taken note of Werefkin on account of my lectures and tours at the museum, the city of Wiesbaden resolved, with the support of all parties, to present an exhibition of the artist's work, which was to be curated by me.¹³ It was seen as a "fortunate circumstance" that I, "as curator of the Wiesbaden picture gallery," was engaged in the "surveying and scholarly evaluation of the painter's estate on behalf of the Werefkin foundation."¹⁴ At that time, one could still read: "The museum itself, according to reliable sources, has affirmed its support for this project."¹⁵ However, things turned out differently, as was rightly reported in the press in May of 1978: "Suspensions have increased that the museum's director Dr. Schmidt is doing his best to boycott a Werefkin exhibition, although it would surely have to be in the interest of his museum."¹⁶ After an unproductive back and forth, the press was finally able to report that, in November of 1978, a joint venture had been established in

Bären (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), exh. cat. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie; Bremen: Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, 2014), 57.

12 "Werefkin-Ausstellung. Im Frühjahr 1980" (Werefkin exhibition: Spring 1980), *Wiesbadener Kurier* (Wiesbaden Messenger), December 7, 1978, 9.

13 Ibid.

14 ng, "Jawlensky-Gefährtin, Werefkin-Ausstellung in Aussicht" (Jawlensky's partner: Prospective Werefkin exhibition), *Wiesbadener Kurier* (Wiesbaden Messenger), February 3-4, 1978, 14.

15 Ibid.

16 WGB, "Werefkin-Ausstellung abgelehnt. CDU möchte 'Interessenkollision' beseitigt wissen" (Werefkin exhibition rejected. Christ Democratic Union wants to avoid a "conflict of interests"), *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* (Wiesbaden Journal), May 24-25, 1978, 5.

Ascona between the head of Wiesbaden's office of cultural affairs, the director of the Museum Wiesbaden, and the Wiesbaden city-council member Hella Wiethoff with the "Werefkin-Gesellschaft." The exhibition was to take place in the spring of 1980.¹⁷ However, its opening was delayed until the fall of 1980—as was inevitable on account of the director's refusing to approve my business trip to Ascona, which was necessary in order to be able to present a sensible selection of the paintings, gouaches, and drawings.¹⁸ Because time was becoming scarce, I wanted to privately finance my trip and applied for vacation in order to do so. However, this was also rejected by Schmidt. It was only through the intervention of one of his superiors that I was finally able to travel to Switzerland in order to take care of the final preparations for the exhibition.

When it had then been realized, *DIE WELT* aptly reported about an "incredibly strange speech given by museum director Ulrich Schmidt at the opening of the large Werefkin exhibition in Wiesbaden." He spoke of "not insubstantial doubts' that he had against the exhibition, of unresolved problems, e.g., difficulties of dating¹⁹ ... and—causing not inconsiderable consternation among his listeners—he did not say a single word about the museum's staff member Bernd Fäthke, who had assembled the exhibition and introduced it with a catalogue essay containing a wealth of new findings. Thus, things seem to have been similarly stormy in the museum on the occasion of the Werefkin exhibition as they were in Werefkin's Munich household."²⁰

This analogy is unlikely to have pleased Ulrich Schmidt or Andreas Jawlensky. The two were surely even less enthusiastic about the commentary of the *Wiesbadener Kurier*, which stated:

By now, as Bernd Fäthke has convincingly proven in the catalogue, art historiographers are giving serious thought to whether she [Werefkin] may thus have helped not only herself but also others in her circle, such as Jawlensky, Gabriele Münter, and Franz Marc, to achieve their breakthrough into a new world of painting. ... Her outstanding draftsmanship—and thus, simply also how highly gifted she was in terms

17 "Werefkin-Ausstellung", 9.

18 *Marianne Werefkin. Gemälde und Skizzen* (Marianne Werefkin: Paintings and Sketches), exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Museum; Bradstetter 1980).

19 These were obviously Ulrich Schmidt's difficulties and not my own.

20 R. Krämer-Badoni, "Sie reinigte die Farbe vom falschen Licht. So stürmisch wie im Haushalt mit Jawlensky: Marianne Werefkins Bilder und Skizzen in Wiesbaden" (One cleaned the colors of the wrong light. Just as dramatic as in the Jawlensky household: Marianne Werefkin's paintings and sketches in Wiesbaden), *DIE WELT* (The World), October 8, 1980, 23.

of craftsmanship—is displayed not least by the sketchbooks that it was possible to incorporate into this exhibition. ... And it is with an absolutely astounding confidence that, in a space the size of her palm, she arranges and chromatically conceives, grasps entirely and is valid in every sense: This can repeatedly be observed with amazement in the large, completed works alongside them.²¹

Weiler's third successor, Volker Rattemeyer, developed a decidedly individual style in dealing with sympathies and antipathies for and against particular directions in art, certain artists, and other people. The fact that Rattemeyer had no qualms about spreading inaccurate claims soon became apparent. A particularly drastic case became public when he accused Alo Altripp (1906–1991), Jawlensky's friend and fellow painter in Wiesbaden, of being “one of the artists or the artist who certainly played an enormously important role in the Nazi Party.”²² This led to irreparable damage.²³ Neither did he spare his predecessor in office. In his characteristically pithy idiom, “Rattemeyer raised,” for example, in connection with the Jawlensky painting *Stilleben mit grüner Flasche* (Still Life with Green Bottle, 1909, fig. 1.2)²⁴ “serious accusations ... against his predecessor, who was responsible. ... The behavior of those responsible during his tenure is in keeping with the tradition of this institution, whose art collection [has been defined] more by problems than by solid work during the last twenty years.”²⁵ At the same time he servilely announced: “The office of the

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- 21 B. Russ, “An einer Wendemarke der modernen Kunst. Marianne Werefkin—ihre Wirkung und ihre Bilder” (At a turning point in modern art: Marianne Werefkin—her impact and her works), *Wiesbadener Kurier* (Wiesbaden Messenger), October 4–5, 1980, 14.
- 22 Volker Rattemeyer (Director, Museum Wiesbaden) in an interview with Martina Conrad, “Wiesbaden lässt sich eine Jawlensky-Sammlung entgehen” (Wiesbaden passes up a Jawlensky collection), *Süd-Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (SWR 2, Hörfunk) (South-West-German Radio), Friday, January 6, 2006, 18:40.
- 23 Bernd Fäthke, *Alo Altripp—Von Farben, Formen und Nichtfarben* (Alo Altripp: About color, form, and non-colors) (Wiesbaden: Galerie Draheim, Wiesbaden 2009), 29–30.
- 24 Bernd Fäthke, “Wer erwarb was warum, Museen aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz begründen ihren wichtigsten Ankauf” (Who acquire what for which reasons? Museums of the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland justify their most important acquisitions), *Kunstmagazin* (Art Magazine), NF 7–8, 22 (1983) 97–98: 112–113.
- 25 jny, “Im Sinne wissenschaftlicher Redlichkeit. Museumsdirektor beendet Streit um Jawlenskys ‘Stilleben mit grüner Flasche’” (In a matter of honesty: Museum director ends dispute over Jawlensky’s “Still Life with Green Bottle”), *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* (Wiesbaden Journal), June 1–2, 1988, 7.



FIGURE 1.2 Alexei Jawlensky, *Still Life with Green Bottle*, 1909, oil on cardboard, 49.5 × 53.5 cm
MUSEUM WIESBADEN

director will take special care to deal with all relevant questions in accord with the Jawlensky family.”²⁶

With this turning over of his own professional expertise to the Jawlensky family, the die had thus also been cast against Werefkin. This was unequivocally revealed when two Werefkin paintings from Switzerland were donated to the Museum Wiesbaden as gifts. The works in question are *Mann im Pelz* (Man in Fur; c. 1890; fig. 1.3)²⁷ and *Badehaus* (Spa Building; 1911; fig. 1.4).²⁸

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Bernd Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin. Leben und Werk* (Marianne Werefkin: Life and Work) (Munich: Prestel, 1988), fig. 25, p. 30.

²⁸ Bernd Fäthke, “1911. Die Blaue Reiterin mit Jawlensky in Ahrenshoop, Prerow und Zingst, Blaue Reiter in München, Murnau und in Berlin” (1911. The Amazon of the Blue Rider with Jawlensky in Ahrenshoop, Prerow, and Zingst, the Blue Rider in Munich, Murnau, and Berlin), 8. *Mitteilung des Vereins der Berliner Künstlerinnen 1908* (8th Memorandums of the Association of Women Artists of Berlin 1908), fig. 16, p. XXXVII.



FIGURE 1.3 *Marianne Werefkin, Man in Fur, c. 1890, oil on canvas, 58 × 49 cm*
MUSEUM WIESBADEN



FIGURE 1.4 *Marianne Werefkin, Spa Building, 1911, tempera on cardboard, 46 × 70 cm*
MUSEUM WIESBADEN

Rattemeyer initially saw to it that the gifts disappeared silently and unremarked in the cellar.²⁹ When this became known, “friends of the arts in Wiesbaden expressed emphatic criticism of Volker Rattemeyer, who had neither informed the public about the two new paintings nor planned to include these or any work at all by Marianne Werefkin in the [coming] project on female artists.”³⁰ Rattemeyer reacted to the protest: “Artistically, Marianne Werefkin is not significant enough” to fit into the concept.³¹

And that was not all, for the exhibition *Künstlerinnen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Female Artists of the 20th Century), which opened on September 1, 1990,³² he also had the museum’s own two works acquired under Weiler—the *Schindelfabrik* (1910; fig. 1.1) and *Am Kamin* (Next to the Fireplace; 1909–10; fig. 1.5)—banished to the cellar. Rattemeyer’s assessment was countered in a commentary: “the link” could have been drawn “without effort” between Werefkin and her female colleagues Sonia Delaunay-Terk and Gabriele Münter.³³ The conclusion was drawn: “At the museum, they have squandered the chance presented precisely at this moment to compellingly present themselves with their own works from their own collection in the exhibition and in the catalogue.”³⁴

Rattemeyer had received his position as director at precisely the same moment that my Werefkin book was being prepared for its printing at the Prestel-Verlag to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the painter’s death. It was meant to simultaneously serve as the exhibition catalogue for a traveling exhibition initiated by the Werefkin foundation. The plan was to initially present the exhibition in Ascona, so that it could subsequently be sent on to Germany. Rattemeyer left no stone unturned in his efforts to hinder the book and the exhibition. He called the Prestel-Verlag to vent his dissatisfaction. He contacted the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin in Ascona in a similar manner, resulting in the foundation fearing that their project might fail. Rattemeyer was not successful, but the Jawlensky heirs filed a copyright lawsuit against the

29 M. Hildebrand, “Ein Bildergeschenk wandert in den Keller” (A picture present is moved to the basement), *Wiesbadener Leben* (Wiesbaden Life), 8/1990, 34.

30 jny, “Zwei Werefkins aus Schweizer Nachlaß, Museum vor umfassenden Sanierungsarbeiten” (Two works by Werefkin in a Swiss estate, museum before extensive renovation), *Wiesbadener Tagblatt* (Wiesbaden Journal), August 23, 1990, 9.

31 Ibid.

32 Werefkin is at least mentioned in one contribution to the catalogue, although in a text that distorts the chronology of events and the facts, see: Sigrun Paas, “Gabriele Münter,” in *Künstlerinnen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Women Artists of the 20th Century), ed. Volker Rattemeyer, exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Museum; Kassel: Weber & Weidemeyer, 1990), 233.

33 Hildebrand, “Ein Bildergeschenk wandert in den Keller”, 34.

34 Ibid.



FIGURE 1.5 *Marianne Werefkin, Next to the Fireplace, 1909–10, tempera on cardboard, 29 × 40 cm*
MUSEUM WIESBADEN

publishing house. The publisher had been too generous in its use of reproductions of Jawlensky's works for comparisons with those of Werefkin—with the result that the catalogue version for the Villa Stuck in Munich already had to be reprinted without images of Jawlensky's work.³⁵ During the stations that followed in Hanover, Berlin, Bad Homburg, and Hamburg, a variation was then also used in which the Jawlensky reproductions were blacked out, very rare copies that are now in demand among collectors.³⁶

The working environment at the Museum Wiesbaden had become intolerable for me, resulting in my requesting that the Hessian ministry of science and art transfer me to a different office. A position with the *Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Hessen* (VSGH; Administration of the state-owned

35 "Jawlensky Erbinnen mit Copyright-Sperre gegen Werefkin-Buch" (Jawlensky heirs with copyright restrictions against Werefkin book), *DER SPIEGEL* (The Mirror), 46 (1988), 237.

36 J. Schmidt-Missner, "Opfer einer Tragödie. Eine kunsthistorische Entdeckung: Die umfassende Retrospektive von Marianne Werefkin in Hannover" (Victim of a tragedy. An art historical discovery: A comprehensive retrospective of Marianne Werefkin in Hanover), *Nürnberger Nachrichten* (Nuremberg News) June 2, 1989.

palaces and gardens of Hessen), based in Bad Homburg vor der Höhe, then opened up in 1990; there, I was soon entrusted with the position of department head of the palace museums, which involved a stimulating variety of tasks. In this role, I was responsible for a number of external offices of the VSGH. In Steinau an der Straße, where the Brothers Grimm grew up, I organized various exhibition for the knight's hall of the palace. The show in which I was able to present Japanese woodcuts formerly owned by Jawlensky to the public for the first time aroused particular attention.³⁷ The exhibition subsequently traveled to the Leopold Hoesch Museum in Düren, where schematic drawings of Jawlensky's paintings once more had to be blacked out in the catalogue.³⁸

One day, in my office in Bad Homburg, I was sent a copy of a letter characteristic of the situation surrounding Werefkin and Jawlensky. Nicole Bröckmann had written it to Jörn Merkert, at the Berlinische Galerie, on May 16, 1995. Among other things, she wrote to him: "Dear Jörn ... You are surely familiar with the story surrounding the Wiesbaden Museum. Fäthke was dismissed there. I spoke with Dr. Rattemeyer about it, and he confirmed that, in Hessen, Fäthke is no longer allowed to publish anything about Jawlensky. He then asked the relevant division head at the ministry of art and science whether this clause had also been stipulated for Werefkin back then. Dr. Rattemeyer said to tell you that you are welcome to call him to learn more about the matter."

It remains to be mentioned that the machinations surrounding the accepting of benefits related to Werefkin and Jawlensky still continue. It is thus to be hoped that the present publication can contribute to establishing a more objective perspective on the legacy of Clemens Weiler. "Perhaps you have heard that Baroness Werefkin died in February. It was a great blow to me. Yes, indeed, sooner or later we have to pay for our mistakes once made. And often so severely."³⁹ (Alexej Jawlensky to Willbrors Verkade, June 12, 1938)

37 *Jawlenskys japanische Holzschnittsammlung. Eine märchenhafte Entdeckung* (Jawlensky's Japanese woodcut collection: A fairy-tale discovery), exh. cat. (Bad Homburg: Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten, 1992).

38 mar, "Erben lieben Schwarz" (Heirs love black), *DIE WELT* (The World), January 9, 1993.

39 Alexei Jawlensky, letter to P. Willibrord Verkade, *Das Kunstwerk* (The Art Work), 2 (1948): 49–50. These sentences, which were published only in the first edition, provide evidence of Jawlensky's lifelong, deep attachment to Werefkin and are essential for understanding his biography. Remarkably, they were deleted in later publications of this letter from Jawlensky to Verkade, one of the most important sources for research into the life and work of Jawlensky. See Clemens Weiler, *Alexej Jawlensky. Köpfe-Gesichte-Meditationen* (Alexei Jawlensky: Heads-Faces-Meditations) (Hanau: Peters, 1970), 126; M. Jawlensky/Pieroni-Jawlensky/A. Jawlensky, *Alexej von Jawlensky. Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, vol. 1, 34.

Marianne Werefkin—From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear: An Exhibition in Retrospect

Petra Lanfermann

Abstract

The 2014 exhibition *Marianne Werefkin: Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), whose development and planning is recounted here, was intended to create a dialogue between the works of Werefkin and those of fellow women artists in her circle. The author also discusses Werefkin's artistic development, her response to the modern *Zeitgeist*, and two important themes in the artist's oeuvre: people at work and at leisure.

The desire to put together a solo exhibition of the work of the prominent painter and artistic personality Marianne Werefkin, whose ground-breaking role in the development of art at the beginning of the twentieth century is still undervalued, was a long cherished dream of the Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen and the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum in Bremen. The idea, which arose in the course of the successful 1999 Gabriele Münter exhibition in Bietigheim-Bissingen, was at the same time an opportunity to expand upon the Städtische Galerie's primary focus: exhibiting the work of the German Expressionists Erich Heckel, Max Pechstein, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Alexei Jawlensky. The Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, founded in 1927 and the first museum worldwide dedicated to a woman painter, has always made it a point to focus on the work of women artists and to acquaint the public with lesser known female artists such as Oda Krohg and Jeanne Mammen.

Marianne Werefkin's name, meanwhile, is known beyond the small circle of art historians and art specialists, but her work has never enjoyed the same level of public reception as that of her male colleagues in *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). Werefkin's "sisters in spirit" have fared similarly: Erma Bossi, Elisabeth Epstein, Natalia Goncharova, Else Lasker-Schüler, Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Maria Marc, and Gabriele Münter. Like Werefkin, these artists often found themselves in positions of difficulty in an art world dominated by men—a situation reflected in their level of name recognition today. The goal of the exhibition was thus to bring examples of the work of these artists into the dialogue

with Werefkin's paintings and to introduce the artists' organization *Der Große Bär* (The Great Bear)—founded at Werefkin's initiative in 1924 in Ascona with her as its sole female member.

Altogether the exhibition included one hundred works by Werefkin and was thus the most comprehensive retrospective of the artist's output ever assembled. The last two substantial exhibitions to be held were 2009 in Rome and 2010 in Moscow; in Germany she has not had a solo exhibition since 2002.¹ Thanks to the cooperative efforts of the two regional German institutions Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen and the Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, in Bremen, it was possible—exactly one hundred years after her forced departure from Germany—to give the artist her due recognition in both southwestern and north-western Germany.

The exhibition included, along with her paintings, drawings, and sketchbooks (including one that was digitized and presented continuously as a video), documentary and archival materials. The primary lending institutions, with almost 30 works on loan, were the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin and the Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, in Ascona,² where Werefkin died in 1938. As only a few works by Werefkin are in public collections, the majority of the loans came from private collections; thus, the preparations required painstaking research and the aid of a broad network of professional colleagues, auction houses, and galleries. Indispensable in this work was the extensive connoisseurship and dedicated support of Bernd Fäthke and his wife, who generously shared the results of their forty years of work and research. Thus it was possible to include works that in part had never before been publically exhibited, allowing us to demonstrate Werefkin's diverse accomplishments and her role in the three artists' groups: *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich), *Der Blaue Reiter*, and *Der Große Bär*. The exhibition, attended by more than 22,000 visitors, was also favorably reviewed in the German press. The comprehensive catalog, with its academic essays and color illustrations of all works on loan, sold out before the exhibition closed.

1 *Marianne von Werefkin in Murnau, Kunst und Theorie, Vorbilder und Künstlerfreunde* (Marianne Werefkin in Murnau, Art and Theory, Models and Artists' Friends), exh. cat. (Murnau: Schloßmuseum Murnau, 2002); Mara Folini, ed., *Marianne Werefkin (Tula 1860—Ascona 1938): l'amazzone dell'avanguardia* (Marianne Werefkin: Amazon of the avant-garde), exh. cat. (Roma: Museo di Roma in Trastevere; Florence: Alias, 2009); *Artisti russi in Svizzera—Marianne Werefkin (Tula 1860—Ascona 1938)* (Russian artists in Switzerland—Marianne Werefkin, 1860–1938), exh. cat. (Moscow: State Tretyakov Gallery; Florence: Alias, 2010).

2 Subsequent references to loans from the museum will be identified using their own abbreviation: "FMW".

Werefkin's response to the modern *Zeitgeist* was intuitive and immediate, and this is reflected in her portrayals of nature's grandeur and in her depictions of working people and the many cabaret, café, and circus scenes. In her work, she chronicled factory workers, washerwomen, and fishermen but also dancers, singers, and artists. Extended travels to Lithuania and France, stays in Murnau and Prerow, and then, finally, her emigration to Switzerland, made necessary by the First World War, were important sources of inspiration for Werefkin. In her adopted home of Ascona on Lake Maggiore, she continued in the 1920s and 1930s to further develop her colorfully vibrant and profound visual language. Her artistic wealth of ideas remained unexhausted until her death; the play with bold color combinations and forced perspectives, her eye for nature and industrial structures, and her perceptive insights into people around her led to ever new and fascinating visual creations. Werefkin's themes and her not always fully discernible visual motives fascinate the viewer, above all because of the contrast between mystical, unreal landscapes consisting of powerful mountain landforms or the endless sea and the mysterious human encounters that take place within them. As early as 1898, she noted: "To portray an expression, a feeling, one doesn't need a hundred figures. On the contrary: Feeling is simple. Feeling is the original element of the current art."³ This is also true for works with few figures: they are the essential actors by which said feeling and visual expression are conveyed.

At the beginning of her artistic career, Werefkin painted in an old-master style that earned her the esteemed epithet the "Russian Rembrandt."⁴ She showed great talent and was encouraged by her family; Ilya Repin then took her on as a student. Soon he, too, attested to her considerable talent: "Bravo! Bravo! I rub my hands in jealousy!"⁵ The works from this period that are still extant, or have been documented, include, for example, *Vera Repin* (1881, Privatstiftung Schloßmuseum Murnau), *Alter Mann* (Old Man, 1890–95, Museum Wiesbaden), *House Servant*, *Jewish Laborer*, and *Marine*—the last three works all from 1890–95, location unknown. Werefkin's close study of the physiognomy and her empathetic handling of her subjects and their activities are

3 Diego Hagmann, Julius Schmidhauser, and Alexander Werefkin, *Marianne Werefkin zum 20. Todesjahr* (Marianne Werefkin on her 20th death anniversary), typescript (Zürich: Sinzig, 1958), vol 1, 40–41.

4 Barbara Weidle, "Malen, zeichnen, schreiben—atemlos" (Painting, drawing, writing—breathless), in *Marianne Werefkin: "Die Farbe beisst mich ans Herz"* (Marianne Werefkin: Color bites my heart), exh. cat. (Bonn: August Macke Haus, 1999), 13, 14–29.

5 Hagmann/Schmidhauser/Werefkin, *Marianne Werefkin zum 20. Todesjahr*, 71.

particularly notable in her full-figure depictions. Werefkin was well supported in her efforts; despite a hunting accident that seriously injured her painting hand, she continued to pursue her artistry with confidence—at a time when higher education and the artistic world were largely off-limits to women.

Coupled with this was the pursuit in her private life of a very unconventional, self-willed path: She chose a life with the womanizer Jawlensky, with whom she lived, unmarried, for almost 30 years and whose child, by the chambermaid Helene, she also raised.⁶ With their move to Munich, in 1896, Werefkin gave up painting in order to support Jawlensky in his own work. The decision was hers, but certainly accorded with social conventions of the time, and the situation she faced was not unlike that of other modernist women artists. After a ten-year period of artistic abstinence, however, Werefkin reconsidered her decision. Her new works show the clear influence of impressions from her travels in France and the lively artistic and intellectual exchanges that took place in the Munich salon she had initiated in 1896. Among the guests who had attended these events was Gustav Pauli, at the time director of the Kunsthalle Bremen, who characterized “the baroness” as “the center, the transmitter, as it were, of waves of force that one could almost physically sense.”⁷ It was in Werefkin’s salon, in 1908, that the idea apparently arose for the founding of the Neue Künstlervereinigung München, the predecessor of the 1911 *Blaue Reiter*. Werefkin contributed substantially to the development of German Expressionism—she was often even a step ahead of her male colleagues among the *Blaue Reiter* and Fauves.⁸

With her return to painting, in 1906, Werefkin dedicated herself for the most part to a thoroughly modern subject: portrayal of the new leisure activities and amusements. She painted people at the circus, the theatre, the café, while dancing, or at the beer garden; a close connection to French role models such as Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Pierre Bonnard can frequently be observed. When she did emphasize specific protagonists, it was not necessarily as individuals, and facial features tended rather to caricature, as can be seen, for example, in the works *Sängerpaar* (Singing Couple) or *Viehmarkt*

6 Werefkin in a letter of 1919, cited in Bernd Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin* (Munich: Hirmer, 2001), 33.

7 Gustav Pauli, *Erinnerungen aus sieben Jahrzehnten* (Memories of seven decades) (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1936), 264–265.

8 Bernd Fäthke provided us with extensive comparisons and proofs for the exhibition catalog, for example Werefkin’s painting *Steingrube* (1907, private collection) or with respect to her contacts to Henri Matisse or Kees van Dongen.

(Stock Market). But she also began to direct her attention to the portrayal of groups of people and to characterize leisure activities as group events by eliminating details of the individual faces, as, for example, in the small gouaches *In der Oper* (At the Opera, 1907, private collection) or the paintings *Biergarten* (Beer Garden, 1907, FMW) and *Frühlingssonntag* (Sunday in Spring, 1907, FMW, fig. 2.1). Of particular interest in this context is the work *Schlittschuhläufer* (Ice Skaters, c. 1911, private collection, Switzerland; permanent loan, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, fig. 2.1), which Werefkin transformed into a scene of nocturnal ambience. Thus she was able to reduce the figures to silhouettes only just revealed by the light of the moon and the brightly lit inn. In contrast to the preliminary studies in her sketchbook, Werefkin placed the mass of people in an S-shaped arrangement in keeping with the graceful glides of the skate runners. In the second version of *Schlittschuhläufer* (1911, FMW), she placed the group of people in a spiral configuration.

Another important aspect in Werefkin's depiction of leisure activities is the isolation of the modern figure. In the painting *Sonntagnachmittag* (Sunday Afternoon, 1908, FMW), a couple sits alone in an empty but otherwise typical garden café—a location where one would expect to find much hustle and bustle, harried service personnel, a crowd of people—thus the depiction takes on a somewhat tragic undertone. The same can be found in the monochrome blue painting *Im Café* (At the Café, 1909, FMW). Four seated figures with cigarettes and untouched drinks are tightly squeezed into the crowded pictorial space. The overall mood, as well as the foreground figure with her bilious green drink in hand, calls to mind works by Edgar Degas, e.g., *Dans un*



FIGURE 2.1 Exhibition view *Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen*, room on spare time activities as a mass phenomenon, from left to right: Marianne Werefkin, *Sunday Afternoon*, FMW; *Stock Market*, 1907, private collection; *Sunday in Spring*, 1907, FMW; *Ice Skaters*, c. 1911, private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan in *Zentrum Paul Klee*, Berne

café (c. 1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). But the differences also become apparent: In Degas' work a couple sits side-by-side in mute silence, without regard for each other or the viewer. Werefkin, however, depicts an illustrious group of companions who clearly accept the viewer as the fifth at the table—in viewing the café scene, the viewer becomes part of the scene. One of the guests sits facing us; the companion to his left appears to be just turning to speak to him or to respond to the—viewer's—comment. Thus the scene also differs from Edvard Munch's *Drikkelag* (Company at the Table, 1906, Munch Museet, Oslo), which Werefkin's composition likewise recalls, in which the viewer is excluded from the party and stands outside group.⁹ By contrast, in Munch's *Selvportrett ved vinen* (Self-Portrait with Wine Bottle, 1906, Munch Museet, Oslo), which it can be assumed may have had an exemplary influence on Werefkin's *Sonntagnachmittag*,¹⁰ Munch places himself facing forward, as if the viewer were sitting at the next table. Werefkin, however, chooses figures with their backs turned to us in *Sonntagnachmittag*. Here and in her painting *Im Café*, she employs, after her own manner, two of Munch's principles: the direct confrontation with a/the penetrating look and the rear-view placement of figures in the painting who, though in fact turned away from the viewer, have been depicted—most notably since the Romantic time—as an artistic means to elicit the viewer's empathy. Munch, in his well-known painting *To mennesker. De ensomme* (Two People—the Lonely Ones, 1899), placed a couple looking out to the sea with their backs to the viewer: an image of loneliness despite togetherness.¹¹ Werefkin's painting likewise suggests such an atmosphere: the

9 See Bernd Fäthke, "Marianne Werefkin—'des blauen Reiterreiterin'" (Marianne Werefkin: Amazon of the Blue Rider), in *Marianne Werefkin. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), cat. exh. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie; Bremen: Museen Böttcherstrasse, 2014), 41.

10 Ibid., 44–45.

11 The motive was from Munch's *Lebensfries* [Frieze of life], on which he worked throughout his lifetime; he also employed the motive in his print work, see Barbara Nierhoff-Wielk, "Edvard Munch: Zwei Menschen—die Einsamen" (Edvard Munch: Two people—the lonely ones), in *Die Liebe ist ein seltsames Spiel... Liebesgeschichten von Klinger bis Picasso* (Love is a mysterious game... Love stories from Klinger to Picasso), cat. exhib. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie, 2011), 20–23, in particular 22: "With the rear-view figure Munch arrived at an artistic approach that directly spoke to and drew the viewer into the narrative of the image. It allowed for the possibility of entering the scene and assuming a role. At the same time Munch's use of the frontal figure offered a further means by which to directly involve the viewer in the narrative by allowing the viewer to see events through the eyes of the protagonist."

couple, however, is not looking out to the sea; instead Werefkin has relocated the couple from a romantic landscape to a table in a Bavarian beer garden.¹²

It is perhaps remarkable that the working class was a lifelong motif for Werefkin, who came from an aristocratic family. In this context the depiction of working women in Werefkin's work takes on an exceptional note of significance. Women were frequently found in the role of teacher or governess, as Werefkin depicted, for example, in *Herbst/Schule* (Autumn/School, 1907, FMW) and *Mädchenpensionat* (Girls' Boarding School, c. 1907, FMW), and as she knew from her grandmother.¹³ At the same time, Werefkin likewise depicted the typical, physically very demanding activities of women, such as washing laundry and the related labor of carrying heavy laundry bags, as can be seen in the works *Wäscherinnen* (Washing Women, 1911, location unknown), *Wäscherinnen* from Darß (Washing Women, 1911, FMW), *Schwarze Frauen* (Black Women, c. 1910, Sprengel Museum Hannover), or *Heimkehr* (Return Home, 1909, FMW). In these paintings the women have an almost uniform appearance: always dark clothing, no faces, often accented by a white head scarf or a hood. In sketches from Prerow and Zingst, she captured the washing women in the same manner (sketchbook 1911, FMW 49-4-666-b14). The dark blue-black clothing of the women and the white of their linen bags in the painting *Schwarze Frauen* before the ornamental setting of the mountain lodges and the sombre blue mountain range with its gleaming crest of red and yellow transforms this everyday—and certainly strenuous—women's work into a festive ceremony and almost a sacred deed. The composition, too, with the path along which the women hurry away receding to the left—the reverse of *Heimkehr*, in which the women enter from the right, proceeding towards us, is revealing: Werefkin utilizes a forced perspective that directs the observer's view to what she considers the most important areas of the image. The same is true of her depictions of male laborers, whose efforts she likewise resolutely captured. As early as her time with Ilya Repin and the *peredvizhniki*, a socially committed artists' cooperative that addressed issues of societal imbalance, Werefkin became attuned to such sentiments, which would have also influenced her choice of motifs in

12 In comparison to Munch's *Selbstbildnis with Weinflasche* [Self-Portrait with Wine Bottle], "[Werefkin] relocated the episode from an interior to a landscape, probably a Bavarian beer garden." Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin*, 122, note 2.

13 As a progressive educator, Werefkin's grandmother, Anna Daragan, had published writings and was director of a school in Moscow before taking over an orphanage in St. Petersburg and later an educational establishment in Tula. See Brigitte Roßbeck, *Marianne von Werefkin, Die Russin aus dem Kreis des Blauen Reiters* (Marianne Werefkin: A Russian woman in the circle of the Blue Rider) (Munich: Siedler, 2010), 11–12.

earlier works such as the aforementioned *House Servant* and *Jewish Laborer*. In the French art of this period, too, above all in the work of Vincent van Gogh, who was so important for Werefkin, the worker was an important visual theme. Werefkin looked to both the rural and the industrial workforce. In her arrays of figures she characterizes the monotone, repetitive drudgery of the daily job; the arduous nature of the labor itself is reflected in the mostly bent posture of the workers. In the paintings *Steingrube* (Stone Quarry, 1907, private collection, Wiesbaden, fig. 2.2), *Gießerei im Freien* (Open-air Foundry, 1910, private collector, Switzerland, on loan to Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, fig. 2.2), *Kalkofen* (Limekiln, 1912, Franz Marc Museum, Kochel am See), and *Die Mühsal* (The Travail, 1917, FMW), one or more of the workers becomes subordinate to the landscape, which dominates the work. At the same time, however, Werefkin's compositional approach and color scheme directs our view toward them. In *Steingrube*, for example, two red flecks of color in the blue tones mark the road roller and the caps of the workers; if we turn to follow the view of the bent-down man turning the hand crank in *Die Mühsal*, we become aware of a small, uniform group of stick-like figures hurrying into a factory. *Die Grube* (The Pit, 1926, FMW) offers a wholesale depiction of workers moving in step together against the colorful background of the quarry. In the painting *Die Bewegung* (The Movement, 1920–30, FMW), however, Werefkin employs a sharply tilted perspective in order to emphasize the farm workers' efforts in carrying out their chores.



FIGURE 2.2 Exhibition view *Städtische Galerie Bietigheim-Bissingen*, room on working world, from right to left: Marianne Werefkin, *Stone Quarry*, 1907, private collection, Wiesbaden; *Open-Air Foundry*, c. 1910, private collection, Switzerland, on permanent loan in *Zentrum Paul Klee*, Bern; *The Travail*, 1917, FMW

In these paintings, the countryside plays an essential role, not as a depiction of nature, but rather as a humanly cultivated landscape and thus the backdrop for the workers' labors. Accordingly, industrial smokestacks often appear alongside churches in her landscapes as "cathedrals of the industrial age," for example, in *Feierabend* (After Work, 1909, private collection, Wiesbaden) or *Fabrikstadt/Der Heimweg* (Factory City/the Way Home, 1912, FMW). In the background of the painting *Der Neubau* (New Building, c. 1926, FMW), we find steep hills and a precipitously tall church tower; in the foreground, however, Werefkin has placed the construction site of a future factory building. In her painting *Nachtschicht* (Night Shift, 1924, FMW), she considers the changing circumstances of the modern working world—shift work was a fully new form of employment with stark consequences with respect to social life. In the paintings featuring industrial landscapes, such as *Feierabend* or *Fabrikstadt/Der Heimweg*, Werefkin further addresses the shift between regular working hours and free time in the industrial age. In 1938 a critic viewed Werefkin's depictions of workers as an expression of the "romanticism of our time."¹⁴

A comparison of Werefkin's pictures of workers with her depictions of fishermen that she painted for the most part while at Lake Maggiore is helpful. The painting *Sturm* (Storm, 1907, FMW) was completed while she was still in Munich. Here Werefkin places in the foreground not the endangered fishing boats on the lake, but rather the lamenting women. In *Fischer im Sturm* (Fishermen in a Storm, 1923, FMW) the relationship between figure and landscape has changed; the work appears much less threatening than the previous painting. While *Der Sturm* is dominated by the emotions of the wildly gesticulating women, *Fischer im Sturm* depicts rather the orderly course of such (re-occurring) storms. The work *Nach dem Sturm* (After the Storm, 1932, FMW) likewise depicts the rather more routine gathering of driftwood to be used as fuel. On account of the dominate atmosphere, works such as *Der große Mond* (The Great Moon, 1923, FMW) and *Sonnenaufgang* (Sunrise, no date, FMW) suggest a more lyrical effect. Stopped by the strenuous nature of their efforts, the men in *Sonnenaufgang* slowly draw a boat up out of the water, yet the early dawn painting in its depiction of a fiery sunrise executed in Van Gogh-like brush strokes radiates an essentially positive underlying mood; likewise, the figures in works such as *Holzfüller* (Lumberjacks, 1932, FMW) and *Der Postbote* (Postman, 1929, FMW) become increasingly nondescript against Werefkin's exuberant depictions of nature.

Werefkin was the only artist among the *Blaue Reiter* members who regularly and variously focused on the world of the working class. For this reason, we

14 Marianne Werefkin, as cited in Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin*, 226.

made this aspect, together with its visual counterpart—the numerous depictions of leisure-time activities, the focal point of our exhibition. Werefkin was a close observer of her environment and carefully deployed the themes of modernity in her own unique visual language. Despite the separation from Jawlensky and her increasing impoverishment in Ascona, she was known as a convivial and cheerful dear lady, and she carried on her work without intermission. Her parting comment to viewers of her paintings was: “I recognize only one form of criticism, and it can be summed up in four words: Go, look, and attempt to appreciate.”¹⁵

15 Cited in Bernd Fäthke, “Werefkins Hommage an Ascona” (Werefkin’s homage to Ascona), in *Marianne Werefkin. “Die Farbe beisst mich ans Herz”* (Marianne Werefkin: Color bites my heart), exh. cat. (Bonn: August Macke Haus, 1999), 34.

SECTION 1

The Cultural Worlds of Marianne Werefkin



PART 1

*Germany and Switzerland as Places of Exchange
and Inspiration*



Marianne Werefkin in Prerow, 1911: The Periphery as Focus

Kornelia Röder and Antonia Napp

Abstract

Like other modernist artists, among them Lyonel Feininger, Erich Heckel, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Marianne Werefkin spent the summer months of 1911 together with Alexei Jawlensky, Helene Nesnakomoff, and their son Andrei on the Baltic Sea, in the small village of Prerow on the Darß, a peninsula on the rural coast of the Baltic Sea. It was at this most removed and peripheral location that Werefkin found the focal point and essence of her own expressionistic approach to art. The essay considers in detail Werefkin's Baltic Sea sketchbooks and the significance of the drawings and paintings she produced in Prerow, Ahrenshoop, and Zingst in 1911.

Overview

Marianne Werefkin's summer on the Baltic Sea in 1911 has long been viewed by scholars through the eyes of Alexei Jawlensky, who later recalled the summer holiday as a time of breakthrough in his art.¹ With respect to Werefkin's choice of living and working environments, the unremarkable and—unlike the neighboring artists' colony of Ahrenshoop—not particularly fashionable village of Prerow had never previously merited any consideration. What then led the cosmopolitan artist, who had lived in Munich since 1896, to settle down for the summer months in this little nest on the Baltic Sea? After stays in Venice, Normandy, Bretagne, and Provence; numerous visits to Paris; and even a detour to Geneva in previous years? The impulse to discover nature and pursue country living as a source of fresh inspiration was already present, going back to the mid-nineteenth century French artists. In addition to the lively nightlife of the city and the salons in their Giselastraße apartment, Werefkin likewise cultivated regular retreats to the country: She travelled to Murnau.

1 Alexej Jawlensky, "Memoirs," in Clemens Weiler, *Alexej Jawlensky: Köpfe, Gesichte, Mediationen* (Alexei Jawlensky: Heads, Faces, Mediations) (Hanau: Peters, 1970), 112.

Thus the summer in Prerow seems downright eccentric. But if we focus specifically on the person of Marianne Werefkin, we find consistency. Previous research has largely dealt with a comparative consideration of Jawlensky and Werefkin's work from 1911.² One topic that has repeatedly been raised is the question of a possible Werefkin/Jawlensky encounter with Erich Heckel, who was staying in Prerow at the same time, but, at present, there is no written evidence to support this idea.³ Werefkin's indispensable companion was her sketchbook, in which she would jot down, for example, lists of tubes of color to buy. One name that we do find in her Prerow sketchbook⁴ is the name and telephone number of the artist Clara Rilke-Westhoff, whom Werefkin evidently planned to contact.

Thanks to the recently published research of Laima Surgailienė-Laučkaitė and the catalog of the Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, in Ascona, Werefkin's biography from the period before her emigration to Munich has come into much sharper focus.⁵ Her close ties to the St. Petersburg and Moscow art scenes have thus been addressed and likewise the interesting biographical fact that Werefkin, who we view as a Russian artist but at the same time exclusively associate with *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) in Munich, in fact, spent her youth and early adult years in Lithuania, on her father's estate near Kaunas on the Baltic Sea. She regularly returned there until the beginning of the First World War, and her ties to Russia were never broken.

Thus, the Baltic coast as a place to live and as a possible artistic motif was more familiar to Werefkin than it first would seem. And there is another event that might have played a role in the choice of this remote holiday resort. Jawlensky and Werefkin founded the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich, NKVM) in 1909. The second NKVM exhibition, in 1910, was also shown in the northern city of Schwerin, in the grand-ducal museum; a copy of an exhibition review recently found in the museum's

2 See Bernd Fäthke, "1911. Die Blaue Reiterin mit Jawlensky in Ahrenshoop, Prerow und Zingst" (1911. The Woman Blue Rider with Jawlensky in Ahrenshoop, Prerow, and Zingst), 8. *Mitteilung des Vereins der Berliner Künstlerinnen* (8th Minutes of the Association of Berlin Women Artists) (Berlin: Verein der Berliner Künstlerinnen, 1998).

3 Fäthke suggests that an encounter was likely given the geographical proximity and similar motives, see Bernd Fäthke, *Jawlensky und seine Weggefährten in neuem Licht* (Jawlensky and his contemporaries in a new light) (Munich: Hirmer, 2004), 152.

4 See Marianne Werefkin, *Skizzenbuch* (Sketch Book), FMW 49-4-666-b14, © Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona.

5 Laima Laučkaitė, *Ekspressionizmo raitelė. Mariana Veriovkina* (Expressionist Rider Marinna Veriovkina) (Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2007).

archives confirms this.⁶ Paintings by Werefkin could thus be seen in Schwerin the year before the summer stay in Prerow; in this connection, the region may already have been in her thoughts.

Artistic Development Prior to 1911

In order to assess the significance of the drawings and pictures produced in 1911 in Prerow, Ahrenshoop, and Zingst, let us first consider Werefkin's prior artistic development. During the ten-year period from 1896 to 1906, she had almost completely given up painting. She dedicated herself solely to promoting Jawlensky in his work. The salon Werefkin regularly organized at their Giselastraße apartment constituted a cosmopolitan focal point, and so, even during this time when she was not painting, she was serving in effect as the spiritus rector of the avant-garde. Along with the salon, it was the trips to the various centers of art that compensated for Werefkin's abstinence from painting. In 1906, she travelled with Jawlensky to France, the impressions of which led her to resume painting. In her *Selbstbildnis* (Self-portrait) we find, in addition to the French Impressionist influences, suggestions of Expressionism. Werefkin owned a painting by Vincent van Gogh;⁷ the abrupt, dynamic brushstrokes in the self-portrait most certainly are a reference to this artistic example. And certainly the theories in Wassily Kandinsky's book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (Concerning the Spiritual in Art), published in 1912, provided direction for her development during this period.

In connection with our topic of the periphery as the core or essence, mention must also be made of the significance of Murnau. Werefkin, along with Kandinsky, Münter, and Jawlensky, began spending the summer months in the small Bavarian village in 1908. The remote location, much like Prerow in 1911, was the antithesis of life in the big city. It was in Murnau that Werefkin came across the reverse-glass painting technique of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the regional folk art provided a further source of inspiration. The rustic use of form and the reduction to basic geometric forms led Werefkin back to the natural and unspoiled, the intrinsic, the existential—to that which she had been seeking for her new start as an artist.

6 W.L. (anonymous author), "Großherzogliches Museum. Neue Künstlervereinigung München" (Großherzogliches Museum. New Munich Artists' Association), *Mecklenburgische Zeitung* (Mecklenburg Newspaper), no. 410, Saturday, September 3, 1910, evening edition.

7 We are grateful to Tanja Malycheva for drawing our attention to this.

A transformation also occurred in the subject matter of her paintings. Scenes from city life are no longer to be found in Werefkin's work after 1908. The landscape and a life in harmony with nature moved to the forefront of her painterly interests. In images rich in color she invoked the universality of nature. The change in motifs accompanied the changes in her artistic approach. The Romanticists had already established nature as the source of spirituality. At the turn of the century, people sought alternatives to the rapidly increasing industrialization of the cities and resulting consequences, and throughout Europe a reform movement began to arise.⁸ Remote, unspectacular locations became refuges in which people, above all artists, sought retreat. These phenomena reinforce our thesis that among artists such peripheral locations often become a focal point for artistic vision and growth.

The Baltic Sea region likewise gained in attraction. Artists such as Lyonel Feininger, Edvard Munch, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Hermann Max Pechstein and even Dadaists such as Hannah Höch, Kurt Schwitters, Sophie Taeuber, Hans Arp, and Raoul Hausmann all spent summers on the Baltic coast.⁹ Werefkin was a frequent visitor to her brother in Kaunas.¹⁰

A Glimpse into the Sketchbook

For this one summer Werefkin traded the mountainous alpine landscape of Murnau for the flat expanse of the Baltic Sea region. The entry in the Prerow list of arrivals ("foreigners") for Werefkin, Jawlensky, Helene Nesnakomoff and her son documents their stay.¹¹ They took up residence in the house of the former lighthouse keeper Gustav Krase in the villa Seestern.

Impressive drawings of Prerow can be found in one of Werefkin's sketchbooks and these constitute an important source for assessing the influence of this summer stay on the Baltic coast upon the artist's body of work.¹²

8 See Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke (eds.), *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegung 1880–1933* (Handbook of the German Reform Movements 1880–1933) (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1998).

9 See Dirk Blübaum and Kornelia Röder (eds.), *Sommergäste. Von Arp bis Werefkin, Klassische Moderne in Mecklenburg und Pommern* (Summer Guests: From Arp to Werefkin, Classical Modernism in Mecklenburg and West Pomerania) (Munich: Hirmer, 2011).

10 From December 1909 until April 1910 they stayed in Kaunas. In May 1910 they visited the 2nd Salon in St. Petersburg.

11 *Prerower Fremdenliste* (Prerow Visitors' List), 1911, Archiv Darß-Museum, Prerow.

12 Werefkin, *Skizzenbuch* (Sketch Book), FMW 49-4-666-b14, © Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Ascona. Some of Werefkin's drawings bear the

Additionally, a letter written by Werefkin from Prerow recently discovered in the archives of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg provides information about her state of mind while there.¹³ On the basis of the Prerow sketchbook and the paintings that were produced there and in Ahrenshoop, it is possible to work out specific groupings of motifs and changes in image composition and approach:

1. Beach scenes with the *Dünenhaus*, *Badehaus*, and *Warmbad*
2. The imposing landscape of coastal dunes
3. The village atmosphere of Prerow with its fishermen's huts and farmsteads, the church, workers in the field, the train station, and the imposing Prerow Strom inlet.
4. Views of the *Familienbad* spa in Zingst, the cliffs of Ahrenshoop, and, repeatedly, the sea.

Careful comparisons with historic photographs and postcards from the period have proven helpful in better placing the various events and experiences Werefkin recorded and interpreting their realization in her own visual language.¹⁴ The locations along the Baltic coast were influenced by the onset of an increasingly fashionable spa and health resort style of architecture while continuing to maintain their traditional village structure. The various architectural forms, reflecting this regional transformation, can also be found in Werefkin's sketch book. However, the modern spa and resort architecture was of little interest to Werefkin. And so the imposing Prerow *Dünenhaus* appears, in the background, of only a single drawing. The incorporation of the building in the landscape establishes the character of the drawing, which consists in only a few concise strokes. The two-story Prerow *Warmbad* has been shifted to the far right margin. The Baltic Sea sketches are dominated largely by diagonals, together with triangular areas of color. Rhythm, mood, and atmosphere are determined by the lively relationships of these areas of color. Bath house, strandkorb, and even the people themselves at the beach become abstract figures that

year notation "1910" in the right margin. Despite extensive research, it was not possible to ascertain the significance of this.

13 We are grateful to Franziska Neumann, who examined the estate of Franz and Maria Marc in Nuremberg.

14 See http://www.heimatsammlung.de/topo_unter/18_ab_03/18_03/18_unter_prerow.htm [accessed: 29 Sep. 2014].
<http://www.ak-ansichtskarten.de/ak/91-Ansichtskarten-Deutschland/20230-18375-Prerow> [accessed: 29 Sep. 2014].



FIGURE 3.1 A,B *Marianne Werefkin, Sketchbook, 7.8 × 12 cm*

© FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA, ASCONA

convey only a motive reference to reality. Astonishing is the liveliness of the drawings, which, even in their limited format of 7.8×12 cm, appear monumental. The feeling of freedom is suitably expressed in the artist's fluid lines. In her letter to the Franz and Maria Marc, Werefkin also mentions the "boundless

informality"¹⁵ that she encountered on the beach. The further pictorial reduction of the sketch emphasizes the solitary figure on the beach (fig. 3.1).

Against the background of a seemingly enormous expanse of nature, the figure seems even more forlorn. One has the impression of a natural world untouched by human hand. The subject of the seashore scene is loneliness; associations with works by Edvard Munch are called to mind. The alienation of the individual became a central theme of the avant-garde, and a cathartic effect was attributed to the outdoor world. Werefkin's depictions of the landscape do indeed seem to conjure up the healing forces of nature. She, too, found the fascination of the sea irresistible and dedicated numerous drawings to the subject. The interaction of heaven and sea convey a fascinating sense of atmospheric mood. Her implementation of the process of detachment from a reality-bound representation of nature is uniquely reflected in these drawings. She captures the glorious colors of the sunset as an imposing natural spectacle in which silhouetted figures become moments of contemplation or meditation such as we know from work of Caspar David Friedrich. In this and other works, the colors serve to convey mood and atmosphere. This contrasts with the pen-and-ink and pencil drawings, which strongly reference the structure within the image composition.

During the artists' stay on the Baltic seacoast, the dunes in Prerow were extended and the stone breakwaters between Prerow and Zingst were laid. Knowing this, the site of certain drawings can be identified. Elegantly dressed figures are rare in the sketchbook. The figure in the black suit and hat could be Jawlensky; the woman hand in hand with the child could be Helene Nesnakomoff with her son by Jawlensky. The persons depicted appear to belong to the artist's immediate circle of acquaintances. Werefkin apparently did not have any direct contact with the village residents; however, she did draw the laborers. But they remain impersonal, appearing instead as stock figures; the women working in the field, for example, are fully contained in the fields of color surrounding them. These drawings focus on the essential aspect of human existence, a life in harmony with nature. The reed-covered houses and small farmsteads with horse-drawn wagons of the coastal region attracted the artist's interest, likewise the *Seemannskirche* (Seafarers' Church), which today still is an emblem of Prerow (fig. 3.2).

In the sketchbook, we find depictions of churches, drawn from various perspectives. The unpretentious architecture of the sacred structures seems predestined for a simplification of form, and taking this motif as an example,

15 See fig. 3.3, letter from Marianne von Werefkin in Prerow to Franz and Maria Marc, 1911, © Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Deutsches Kunstarchiv, NL Marc, Franz, I.C-79.



FIGURE 3.2 A,B *Marianne Werefkin, Sketchbook, 7.8 × 12 cm*

© FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA, ASCONA

it is possible to follow the progression of the abstraction process. The region around the small harbor of Prerow, with its sailing ships and boatsheds, reflects the flair that is typical of the fishing villages along the Baltic Coast. Goods brought by ship to Prerow are loaded onto carts and wagons. The drawings

suggest that time has stood still. The weathered pines along the coast, shaped by the tempestuous storms and fierce winds that sweep over them, are likewise typical of the region, and, as symbols of resistance to the forces of nature, they were a source of great fascination to both Werefkin and Jawlensky. Werefkin also visited Zingst and Ahrenshoop; a drawing of the family spa in Zingst and the painting of the seaside cliffs in Ahrenshoop document the visits to these two nearby villages, which were easily reached via the Darßbahn, a small railway branch line.¹⁶

Traces of Their Summer on the Baltic Sea—Paintings from Prerow and Ahrenshoop

Despite their sketchiness, Werefkin's drawings demonstrate a sure hand in form and shape and a color palette fully emancipated from nature's model; they exemplify the artist's new visual approach. The painting *Bahnhof von Prerow* (Prerow Railway Station) depicts the station with an arriving or departing train; the motif, however, carries a metaphoric sense extending far beyond that which it depicts.¹⁷ The station is situated in the basin; the figures that wander in are a reoccurring motif. The enormous sense of depth conveyed in the image is a result of the use of ellipsoidal and concave shapes, curved lines, and extreme diminutions such as the small white sail shimmering on the horizon. By comparison, the body of water in *Prerowstrom* looks less like an inlet than it does a road winding off into the distance. Significantly, there was an avoidance of anything resembling a classic subject. The work *Die Wäscherinnen* (The Washerwomen), on the other hand, depicts an actual scene from the shore of the Prerow Strom: This time the banks and the bridges are the sinuous lines that give the image its strongly "organic" feel; the subject is workaday life. The development of Werefkin's approach is reflected here in the expressive use of color and the avoidance of any overly rich detail. The image is constructed much like that of the train station: A sinuous line (path) leads from left to right, this time ascending. Houses, pine trees, and church appear as small set pieces populating the landscape. Interestingly, from among her various sketches, Werefkin chose those suggesting movement, thus the

16 <http://www.bahninfo.de/sonderseiten/darssbahn/> [accessed: 29 Sep. 2014].

17 Particularly when compared with the postcard view, which strives for a sense of monumentality (low-angle, diagonal view), it is clear just how insignificant civil achievements such as the train station were for Werefkin in the face of nature (the dunes, the arm of the sea).

wanderer motif occurs once again. Modulation of the colors in the flat areas is achieved by means of contrasting complements, and dynamic color progressions strengthen the work's expressiveness. The delicacy of the brush work as compared to that of Jawlensky's work is notable. The composition is dominated by a diagonal. In her paintings, as compared to her drawings, Werefkin has conspicuously radicalized these lines. In *Badehaus* the road (central perspective) leads away into the distance, and the bath house of the title falls right in with this movement. Significant once more is the single figure of the wanderer; there is no suggestion at all of any anecdotal beach life. The painting *Steilküste von Ahrenshoop* (Steep Coast of Ahrenshoop) would likely fall into this same category (fig. 3.3). The paintings of Prerow and Ahrenshoop, in their painterly effect and clear sense of composition, are plainly of the same group.

Results from the 1911 Summer in Prerow

The tremendous gain in knowledge that a study of the sketchbooks brings is to be found in the clarity they introduce with respect to the development



FIGURE 3.3 *Marianne Werefkin, Steep Coast of Ahrenshoop, 1911, tempera on cardboard, 55 × 73.5 cm*
 FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA,
 ASCONA

of Werefkin's artistic process during this period. She herself initially characterized the start of their stay in Prerow as uninspiring (fig. 3.4), writing to Franz and Maria Marc, in the only known letter from Werefkin in Prerow:

Here on our peninsula of Darss, we still feel like we're on an expedition in search of provisions and artistic inspiration. Neither is to be found here. But there is an endless and splendid beach, delightful air, a sense of unlimited informality and weather unknown to us from our dear Bavaria: no thunderstorms, no steady rains, no cloudbursts. If Helen can find the genius to cook something out of nothing, and we to paint from nothing—then Prerow won't be half bad, provided that all remain healthy.¹⁸

In contrast to the sketchbooks of other artists, Werefkin was not so much interested in figure studies or capturing certain looks, which is rather astonishing for an artist who in her early years as the “Russian Rembrandt” was known for her old-master/impressionist portraits. Looking at the Prerow sketchbook, we see just how quickly and ably she could capture an architectural building. After the pencil work, the contours were traced in with India ink. Color choices were likewise noted in ink (the sky, for example, “pink” and “violet”) and also atmosphere (“very unsettled”). The color composition was of greatest importance, and therein lay her particular path to abstraction.

The paintings from Prerow, with some further examples from the years 1907 to 1913, comprise altogether a characteristic and solid main phase in Werefkin's work. The simplification of individual pictorial elements with the purpose of strengthening the overall composition, the abstraction of surfaces and the subtleness of the color progressions are all elements that were present earlier (beginning in 1907), but in Prerow—perhaps even because of her postulated “nothing to be found here”—they attain clarity and incisiveness. Werefkin succeeds here in a painterly synthesis of her theoretical knowledge of abstraction and expressive tendencies, but also of her earlier practical experience with the hue and flavor of the Russian painters of the nineteenth century and her

18 „Wir auf unserer Halbinsel Darss fühlen uns noch immer auf einer Entdeckungsreise nach Lebensmitteln und Objekten für künstlerische Inspiration. Beides ist hier nämlich nicht vorhanden. Dafür aber ein unendlich prachtvoller Strand, eine köstliche Luft, eine unbegrenzte Zwanglosigkeit und ein Wetter, wie man es in unserem lieben Bayern nicht kennt: keine Gewitter kein Landregen, keine Wolkenbrüche. Wenn Helene das Genie hat aus nichts zu kochen, und wir dasjenige aus nichts zu malen—so kann Prerow auch nicht schlecht werden, vorausgesetzt dass alle gesund sind.“ Letter from Marianne von Werefkin in Prerow to Franz and Maria Marc, 1911, Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Deutsches Kunstarchiv, NL Marc, Franz, I.C-79.

Ostseebad Prerow.
auf dem Dars.
prof. Sommer
Liebe Freunde. Villa Seestra.

Heute haben wir ihre
Anzeige erhalten und
beilen uns ihnen nochmals
unser innigsten Glückwünsche
zu senden. Wir hätten sie
wären in Italien, was es
schön? haben sie auch ge-
betet? wie gefällt jetzt
ihnen das friedliche
Sindelsdorf? Wir auf unserem
Halbinsel Dars. fühlen
uns noch immer auf
einer Entdeckungsreise
nach Lebensmitteln und
Objekten für künstlerische
Inspiration. Beides ist hier
nämlich mit vorhanden.
Dafür aber ein unendliche
prachtvolle Strand.

FIGURE 3.4 Letter from Marianne Werefkin to Franz and Maria Marc, Prerow, 1911

encounter with the symbolically loaded, ornamental worlds of the Russian *fin de siècle*. The shaping of the pictorial space by means of ellipsoidal elements, an extreme (central) perspective, and the wanderer motif introduced a transcendent level in Werefkin's approach. With her sophisticated color progressions, she contributed a unique, powerful, and unmistakable voice to the art of Expressionism.

Werefkin's artistic development, which she was able to so concisely formulate in Prerow, was abruptly interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, and later, in her Swiss exile from Ascona, she went on to pursue other paths. But it was here, on the periphery that was the rural coast of the Baltic Sea, that Werefkin found the focal point, the essence, of her own expressionistic approach to art.

Exile, the Avant-Garde, and Dada: Women Artists Active in Switzerland during the First World War

Isabel Wünsche

Abstract

The outbreak of World War I led to the exile of many artists and intellectuals from Germany. Marianne Werefkin and Alexei Jawlensky went to Switzerland. In Zurich, Werefkin came into contact with the artists associated with the Cabaret Voltaire, and in Ascona with the community of Monte Verità. The women artists with whom she was in touch during the war years included the performer and poet Emmy Hennings, the writer and journalist Claire Goll, the dancer and artist Sophie Taeuber, the dancer Clotilde von Derp as well as the artists and future promoters of modernist art in the United States, Hilla Rebay and Emmy Scheyer. The essay sheds new light on the émigré artists' circles active in Switzerland during World War I by highlighting the relationships between these women.

The outbreak of World War I forced many artists and intellectuals living in Germany into exile, among them the cabaret performer Emmy Hennings, the writer Claire Goll, and the painter Marianne Werefkin. In this essay, I explore the situation of these women artists in exile and the conditions under which they attempted to continue their artistic careers, specifically the influence of their interpersonal relationships, which were often intensely close as well as competitive, both personally and professionally, and the importance of their networking and support systems.

Marianne Werefkin and Alexei Jawlensky, living together in Munich in 1914, were classified as enemy aliens and forced to leave Germany immediately at the outbreak of the war. Escorted by police to the border in Lindau, they crossed into Switzerland, leaving behind most of their possessions. With the assistance of Alexander von Chruschtschoff, a Russian nobleman who had a chalet in Lausanne, they were able to rent a small apartment on Rue du Motty in St. Prex, a small fishermen's village on Lake Geneva.¹ There they lived a

1 Angelika Affentranger-Kirchrath, *Jawlensky in der Schweiz 1914–1921* (Jawlensky in Switzerland 1914–1922) (Berne: Benteli, 2001), 22. Exhibition catalog.

rather seclusive but artistically productive life despite the European situation at large and an increasing tension in their relationship. Werefkin reported to Herwarth Walden on May 28, 1915: "We are living out in the country, in a place so tiny one can hardly turn around."²

One of their mutual friends was the dancer, painter, and choreographer Alexander Sacharoff. Sacharoff and Werefkin knew each other from Munich, where Sacharoff had been a member of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich) and worked with Wassily Kandinsky and Thomas von Hartmann on combining music, drawing, and dance into a synthetic work of art.³ Both Werefkin and Jawlensky had made sketches of his remarkable dance performances and also painted him. Sacharoff, who had been on holiday with his mother in Switzerland, became stranded there at the outbreak of the war. Not being allowed to return to Germany, he found himself in an involuntary "artists' colony" in Lausanne. In 1916, Sacharoff's dance partner Clothilde von Derp (1892–1974) joined him. She remembered:

Almost the entire Russian Munich colony was in Switzerland. Alexander had settled in Lausanne. Marianne Werefkin and Jawlensky were in St. Prex. Strawinsky lived in Morges.... Alexander met Strawinsky and Diaghilew at Jacques-Delcroze's in Geneva. Diaghilew convened his ballet company in Lausanne. They were waiting for Massine, who was coming from Russia and would travel on with the company to America. The famous ballet master Enrico Cecchetti was preparing the group for its tour. Marianne Werefkin knew Diaghilew well and told him about me. He immediately agreed that Cecchetti should also look after me.⁴

2 "Wir leben ganz auf dem Lande, in einer winzigen Wohnung, wo man sich kaum drehen kann. Dennoch arbeiten wir beide [,] seitdem wir wieder zu unseren Farben gekommen sind." Marianne Werefkin, Letter to Herwarth Walden, May 28, 1915, Sturm-Archiv, Staatsbibliothek Berlin. See also Brigitte Roßbeck, *Marianne von Werefkin. Die Russin aus dem Kreis des Blauen Reiters* (Marianne von Werefkin: The Russian Woman in the Circle of the Blue Rider) (Munich: Siedler, 2010), 184. See also Brigitte Salmen, *Marianne von Werefkin. Leben für die Kunst* (Marianne von Werefkin: A Life for Art) (Murnau: Schloßmuseum; Munich: Hirmer, 2012), 84. Exhibition catalog.

3 Rainer Stamm, "Alexander Sacharoff—Bildende Kunst und Tanz" (Alexander Sacharoff—The Fine Arts and Dance), in *Die Sacharoffs. Zwei Tänzer aus dem Umkreis des Blauen Reiters* (The Sacharoffs: Two Dancers in the Circle of the Blue Rider), ed. Frank-Manuel Peter and Rainer Stamm (Cologne: Wienand, 2002), 11–27. See also Schönberg, *Kandinsky, Blauer Reiter und die Russische Avantgarde* (Schönberg, Kandinsky, The Blue Rider, and the Russian Avantgarde), (Vienna: Arnold Schönberg Center, 2000). Exhibition catalog.

4 "Fast die ganze russische Münchner Kolonie war in der Schweiz. Alexander hatte sich in Lausanne niedergelassen. In Saint-Prex wohnten Marianne von Werefkin und Jawlensky.



FIGURE 4.1

Clotilde von Derp, c. 1914–15

PHOTOGRAPH BY HANNS HOLDT, DTK

Von Derp—Clotilde Margarete Anna Edle von der Planitz—received ballet lessons as a child from Julie Bergmann and Anna Ornelli of the Munich Opera. In 1910, at the age of eighteen, she gave her first performance using the stage name Clotilde von Derp. Audiences were enthralled by her striking beauty and youthful grace (fig. 4.1); among her admirers were Rainer Maria Rilke and Ivan Goll. Max Reinhardt offered her the title role in his pantomime *Sumurûn*, which proved a great success while on tour in London. From 1913 onward, von Derp performed together with Sacharoff, whom she followed to Switzerland in 1916. In Lausanne, von Derp attended ballet classes with Enrico Cecchetti. Together with Sacharoff, she performed throughout Switzerland in 1916–17, accompanied by Werefkin. Eventually, the couple settled in Zürich, where they were married on July 25, 1919, with Werefkin as their witness (fig. 4.2). Werefkin's pension had been cut in half following the outbreak of the war and

Strawinsky lebte in Morges.... Alexander begegnete Strawinsky und Diaghilew bei Jacques-Dalcroze in Genf. Diaghilew versammelte sein Ballett in Lausanne. Man erwartete Massine, der aus Russland kommen und daraufhin mit dem Ballett nach Amerika fahren sollte. Der berühmte Ballettmeister Enrico Cecchetti bereitete die Gruppe für die Tournee vor. Marianne von Werefkin kannte Diaghilew gut und erzählte ihm von mir. Er willigte sofort ein, daß Cecchetti sich auch um mich kümmere." Clotilde Sacharoff, "La vie que nous avons dansee" (The life we have danced), in *Die Sacharoffs. Zwei Tänzer aus dem Umkreis des Blauen Reiters* (The Sacharoffs: Two Dancers in the Circle of the Blue Rider), ed. Frank-Manuel Peter and Rainer Stamm (Cologne: Wienand, 2002), 164.



FIGURE 4.2 *Clotilde von Derp and Alexander Sacharoff, wedding photograph with Marianne Werefkin as witness, 1919*

FONDO HARALD SZEEMANN, ARCHIVIO DI STATO DEL CANTONE TICINO, BELLINZONA

payment stopped entirely after the October Revolution of 1917. In search of new sources of income to keep up the household, Werefkin toured once again with the Sacharoffs in 1919–20, serving as stage manager.

After the Sacharoffs had settled in Zürich, Jawlensky also began looking for an apartment there. We know this from another Russian émigré, Ivan Goll, who reported in a letter to his new love and later wife, Claire Goll, from Lausanne on September 16, 1917:

Yesterday I... visited Werefkin.... First of all: she was alone, for eight days already, entirely alone, as Jawlensky and Andre are spending their time in Zurich looking for an apartment. (Did you know that?)⁵ ...

5 “Gestern war ich ... bei der Werefkin,... Zunächst: sie war allein, seit 8 Tagen ganz allein, denn Jawlensky und Andre weilen derzeit in Zürich zum Wohnungsuchen. (Kennst Du das?)” Ivan Goll, Letter to Claire Goll, September 16, 1917, in Claire Goll, Yvan Goll, Paula Ludwig, *“Nur einmal noch werd ich dir untrübe sein”*: Briefwechsel und Aufzeichnungen 1917–1966 (“Only once more I will be unfaithful to you:” Correspondence and Notes 1917–1966) (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2013), 12.



FIGURE 4.3
Claire Goll, photograph

Then we went for a walk. A divine landscape. The last, calm summer day.... Marianne told me all about her life. All of it. Now I know Jawlenski and—despise him....

After Marianne's confession came mine: we talked a lot about you. How well she knows you.... She thinks very highly of you, expects a great deal from our being together.⁶

The writer and journalist Claire Goll (née Aischermann; later Studer, then Goll; 1891–1977, fig. 4.3) was one of many pacifists who immigrated to Switzerland during World War I. She enrolled at the University of Geneva, became active in the peace movement, and wrote for a number of leftist newspapers. Werefkin is mentioned in her diary entry from October 18, 1917: “Visited Ehrenstein. Saw Werefkin in the evening, at the train station, just as she was arriving back from

6 “Dann gingen wir spazieren. Eine göttliche Landschaft. Letzter, ruhiger Sommertag....da hat mir Marianne ihr ganzes Leben erzählt. Ganz. Nun kenne ich Jawlenski und—verachte ihn....

Nach Mariannes Beichte kam die meine: wir sprachen viel von Dir. O wie sie Dich kennt.... Sie hält sehr viel von Dir, erwartet sehr viel von unserem Zusammensein.” *Ibid.*, 12–13.

Freiburg. She kissed me joyfully. I'm happy that she's here. An enrichment for the city."⁷

In 1917, Werefkin and Jawlensky moved into an apartment in the Drosselstraße in Zürich-Wollishofen. Jawlensky remembered: "In 1917 we moved from St. Prex to Zurich, where, at the time, Alexander Sacharoff was living with his wife Clothilde von Derp. They were our very best friends. We were in Zurich for half a year. It was an interesting time, during which we met many interesting people."⁸

During World War I, Zurich served not only as a refuge for pacifists, deserters, and European intellectuals, but also as a center for the artistic avant-garde and as the birthplace of Dadaism. Claire Goll later reported:

When I arrived in Zurich, in mid-1917, still before Goll, there was no sign of Dada fever in the city. As a matter of fact, Switzerland had never seen such a collection of avant-garde heads, from Arp to Stefan Zweig, from Tristan Tzara to Else Lasker-Schüler, from Hugo Ball to Emil Ludwig, and for a time Werfel, Lehbruck, Janco, Jawlensky, and others. We were outraged by the horrors of the war and fought reactionary art as well as the dishonesty of the word. But the pacifist ideal was not universal.... Since our move to Zurich, we've been on cordial terms with Arp, Richter, and Hugo Ball. In the literary discussions, there was much talk about Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism, but the word "Dada" was hardly mentioned at all, other than when someone referred to the journal or the Dada gallery.⁹

7 "Waren bei Ehrenstein. Trafen Abends die Werefkin, soeben von Freiburg ankommend am Bahnhof. Sie küßte mich mehrere Male. Ich freue mich, daß sie hier ist. Die Stadt wird reich." Claire Goll, diary of October 18, 1917, in *ibid.*, 24.

8 "1917 siedelten wir von St. Prex nach Zürich über, wo damals Alexander Sacharoff mit seiner Frau Clothilde von Derp wohnten. Sie waren unsere grössten Freunde. Wir blieben ein halbes Jahr in Zürich. Es war eine interessante Zeit, in der wir besonders verschiedene interessante Menschen kennen lernten." "Alexej von Jawlensky: Lebenserinnerungen, 1937 diktiert an Lisa Kümmel" (Alexei Jawlensky: Life Memories, 1937, dictated to Lisa Kümmel), in Clemens Weiler, *A. Jawlensky—Köpfe, Gesichte, Meditationen* (A. Jawlensky—Heads, Faces, Meditations) (Hanau: Peters, 1970), 119.

9 "Als ich Mitte 1917, noch vor Goll, in Zürich ankam, fand ich die Stadt keineswegs vom Dada-Fieber geschüttelt vor. Tatsache war, daß die Schweiz noch nie so viele avantgardistische Köpfe beisammen gesehen hatte, von Arp zu Stefan Zweig, von Tristan Tzara zu Else Lasker-Schüler, von Hugo Ball zu Emil Ludwig und zeitweise auch Werfel, Lehbruck, Janco, Jawlenski und andere. Wir alle waren über die Schrecken des Krieges empört, wir alle bekämpften die

The center of Dadaist events was the Cabaret Voltaire, which opened its doors on February 5, 1916, in the Spiegelgasse in Zurich; its organization was in the hands of Hugo Ball, along with Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janco, Tristan Tzara, and later Hans Richter. The cabaret featured spoken word, dance, and music. The soirees were often raucous events with artists experimenting with new forms of performance such as sound poetry and simultaneous poetry. Hans Richter commented: "It seemed almost as if it was the utter diversity, indeed, the irreconcilability of the character, background, and outlook on life of the Dadaists that was the source of the 'dynamic' direct energy behind this fortuitous meeting of people from all corners of the globe."¹⁰

The only woman in the Dada circle was Emmy Hennings (1885–1948, fig. 4.4). Hennings was a cabaret performer, chanteuse, and poet who lived a truly bohemian life, traveling with various *variété* and vaudeville troupes all over Europe and eventually spending extended periods in Berlin and Munich. She performed at the Berlin Café des Westens (Café of the West) and worked as a *diseuse* at the Munich Artists' Cabaret Simplizissimus, but also wrote poetry and published texts in avant-garde periodicals. Hennings became an intimate of a number of the avant-garde poets, playwrights, and novelists who populated the cafés and clubs in Berlin and Munich. In 1913, she met Hugo Ball at the Café Simplizissimus and in November 1914 she joined him in Berlin. To escape the increasing nationalism, Hennings and Ball left Berlin for Zurich in May 1915. They arrived completely destitute and were dependent on the assistance of Hennings' literary friends until they found work with a vaudeville troupe.

In 1916, they decided to start their own cabaret and, on February 5, 1916, they opened the Cabaret Voltaire. There Hennings became one of the star attractions; her wide repertoire included popular songs from Denmark, Paris, and Berlin, Chinese ballads, folk songs, her own poems, and poetry written by other dadaists. Hennings' charisma as a performer and her previous cabaret

reaktionäre Kunst ebenso wie die Verlogenheit des Wortes. Aber das pazifistische Ideal war nicht überall verbreitet.... Seit unserem Umzug nach Zürich waren wir mit Arp, Richter und Hugo Ball freundschaftlich verbunden. In den literarischen Diskussionen war viel von Expressionismus, Kubismus und Futurismus die Rede, aber das Wort 'Dada' fiel so gut wie nie, außer wenn jemand die Zeitschrift oder die Galerie Dada erwähnte." Claire Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem. Eine literarische Chronique scandaleuse* (I don't forgive anyone: A scandalous literary chronique), (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1980), 49.

- 10 "Es schien geradezu, als ob die Verschiedenartigkeit, ja Unvereinbarkeit der Charaktere, der Herkunft, des Lebensbildes der Dadaisten jene Spannung ergab, die dem zufälligen Zusammentreffen von Leuten aus aller Herren Länder schließlich die gleichgerichtete 'dynamische' Energie lieferte." Hans Richter, *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst* (DADA and Anti-Art), 3rd ed. (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1973), 11.



FIGURE 4.4
Emmy Hennings with Dada puppets,
spring 1917, photograph

experience contributed to the success of the venture; according to the *Zürcher Post*, Hennings was the “shining star of the Voltaire” and the incarnate cabaret artist of her time.¹¹ In 1917, Hennings and Ball left their bohemian lifestyle behind, moving to the Tessin and converting to Catholicism. They eventually married on February 21, 1920.

Werefkin and Jawlensky associated with many of the Dadaists, but did not participate in their performances. Hugo Ball noted on June 26, 1917: “Visit from Mme. Werefkin and Jawlensky. They were in Lugano, helped Sacharoff with the staging of his dances and admired Janco’s pictures.”¹²

11 Bärbel Reetz, Emmy Ball-Hennings. *Leben im Vielleicht—Eine Biographie* (Emmy Ball-Hennings: A Life in Perhaps—A Biography) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 148–149.

12 “Besuch von Mme Werefkin und Jawlensky. Sie waren in Lugano, haben Sacharoff bei der Inszenierung seiner Tänze geholfen und bewundern Jancos Bilder.” Hugo Ball, Letter to August Hofmann, Magadino, Tessin, June 27, 1917, in Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings, *Damals in Zürich. Briefe aus den Jahren 1915–1917* (Back then in Zurich: Letters of the Years 1915–1917) (Zurich: Arche, 1978), 154.

Although the Dadaists had their own (if short-lived) venue, most of the intellectuals, writers, and émigrés spent their days in the Zurich coffee houses. Hugo Ball reported to his sister Maria in November 1916: “Here in Zurich, we’ve got the Café des Westens (Berlin) in the flesh. You can see quite clearly just how sick the entire German intelligentsia is. Almost all are on a leave of absence in Switzerland (and perceive their stay as exile).”¹³

The Café de la Terrasse and the Café Odeon were the main meeting places of the Berlin and Munich avant-garde scenes. Claire Goll remembered: “Everyday we went to the café, where I would see once more old friends from the Berlin Café des Westens.”¹⁴ The poet Else Lasker-Schüler was in residence at the Terrassen-Café (fig. 4.5). Claire Goll describes her appearance as follows:

At the terrace café, we usually would find Else Lasker-Schüler, surrounded by her court of admirers and playing with bonbons. She always had some with her, in all shapes and colors, wrapped in crinkly cellophane or silver paper. She would fish them out of her handbag, her dress, her

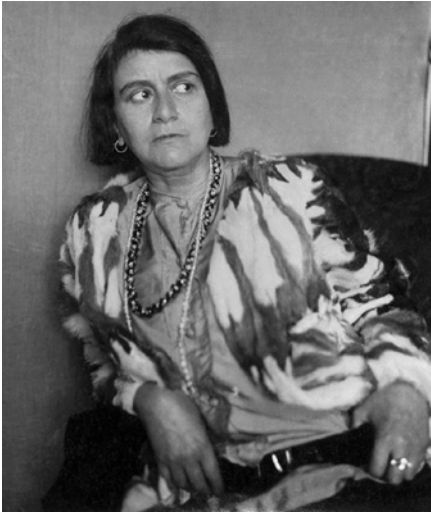


FIGURE 4.5
Else Lasker-Schüler, photograph

- 13 “Hier in Zürich haben wir das leibhaftige Café des Westens (Berlin). Man sieht so recht, wie krank die ganze deutsche Intelligenz ist. Fast alle sind beurlaubt in die Schweiz (und empfinden den Aufenthalt hier als Exil).” Hugo Ball, Letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, Zürich, November 28, 1916, in Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, 111.
- 14 “Täglich gingen wir ins Café, wo ich alte Bekannte aus dem Berliner ‘Café des Westens’ wiedersah.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 50.

cleavage, then arrange them on the table into pyramids or use them as dominoes. She even used the sweets for paying, and the waiters would play along, as her reputation as an eccentric was known far and wide.... At the time she was the greatest female poet in Germany and no one dared to refuse her.¹⁵

The Café Odeon was another meeting place for intellectuals, writers, and poets:

We spent our afternoons at the Café Odeon, the meeting place of our generation, discussing news of the war and new artistic events, but to a large extent, our conversations turned now to the expressionist dance. The musician Laban had started a dance class on Seehofstraße. Sophie Taeuber, Arp's girlfriend, danced there, and all ballerina fanciers danced along behind.¹⁶

Sophie Taeuber (1889–1943, fig. 4.6) was the only Swiss citizen among the émigré artists and while she joined the Dadaists on many occasions, she was also the only one who had a daytime job and a regular income. Starting in May 1916, she was head of the textile department at the Zurich Arts and Crafts School. Taeuber had been born to German parents in Davos, but her mother took up Swiss citizenship after the untimely death of her father. Taeuber studied at the textile department of the École des arts décoratifs in St. Gallen from 1906 to 1910 as well as at the Debschitz-Schule in Munich and the Arts and Crafts School in Hamburg between 1911 and 1914. When World War I broke out, she moved to Zurich. In addition to her art and design work, she began

15 “Im Terrassen-Café fanden wir meist, umgeben von einem bewundernden Hofstaat, Else Lasker-Schüler vor, die mit Bonbons spielte. Sie hatte immer welche bei sich, in allen Farben und Formen, in knisterndes Zellophan oder Silberpapier gewickelt. Sie kramte sie aus ihrer Tasche, dem Kleid, dem Ausschnitt, schichtete sie auf dem Tisch zu Pyramiden auf oder benutzte sie als Dominosteine. Sie zahlte sogar mit diesen Süßigkeiten, und die Kellner machten den Zirkus mit, denn ihr Ruf als Exzentrikerin hatte sich bis zum letzten Piccolo herumgesprochen. Ihr verzieh man alles. Sie war damals die größte deutsche Dichterin, und niemand wagte es, ihr etwas abzuschlagen.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 50–51.

16 “Im ‘Café Odeon’, dem Treffpunkt unserer Generation, verbrachten wir unsere Nachmittage mit Diskussionen über die Kriegsberichte und neue künstlerische Ereignisse, zum großen Teil aber kreisten unsere Gespräche jetzt um den expressionistischen Tanz. Der Musiker Laban hatte nämlich in der Seehofstraße einen Tanzkurs eröffnet. Sophie Täuber, Arps Freundin, tanzte dort, und alle Ballettinnenliebhaber tanzten hinterher.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 52.



FIGURE 4.6

Sophie Taeuber, Aubette, Strasbourg, 1926–27, photograph

to study dance at the School of Rudolf Laban in 1915. The following summers, she performed with the Laban dance group at the artists' colony on Monte Verità near Ascona. Taeuber met Hans Arp at an exhibition of modern tapestries, embroidery, paintings, and drawings in the Galerie Tanner in November 1915, and he introduced her to the Dada circles. She participated in Dada performances as a dancer, choreographer, and puppeteer and designed puppets, costumes, and sets for performances at the Cabaret Voltaire as well as for other Swiss and French theaters. At the opening of the DADA Gallery, in March 1917, Taeuber danced to verses by Hugo Ball, wearing a shamanic mask by Marcel Janco.

Taeuber and Arp (fig. 4.7) shared similar artistic interests; rejecting traditional forms of expression, they explored a broad variety of materials and techniques. Claire Goll gives us a lively description of their experimental studio:

At most anytime you would find them busy with gluing, stitching, cutting, weaving or building marionettes, which they would let dangle from hooks in the ceiling. The mood was like the first day of Creation, Arp and Sophie re-inventing the world, together with new laws and possibilities



FIGURE 4.7 *Sophie Taeuber and Hans Arp with marionettes, photograph*
STIFTUNG ARP E.V., BERLIN/ROLANDSWERTH

of understanding. There was something ethereal about this couple; they resembled two winged ants or butterflies above a flowering meadow: she gracious, smiling, calm; he amused and comical, with hands that were constantly busy kneading, caressing, and assembling...¹⁷

Among the women artists discussed here, Taeuber seems to have been the most self-assured and versatile, able to bridge the responsibilities of everyday life and her artistic work.

¹⁷ "Zu jeder beliebigen Zeit traf man die beiden beim Kleben, Sticken, Ausschneiden, Weben oder Basteln von Marionetten an, die sie dann an Haken von der Decke baumeln ließen. Immer herrschte eine Stimmung wie am ersten Schöpfungstag. Arp und Sophie erfanden die Welt neu, mitsamt neuen Gesetzen, neuen Verständigungs möglichkeiten. Dieses Paar hatte etwas Ätherisches, sie ähnelten zwei geflügelten Ameisen oder Schmetterlingen über einer blühenden Wiese: sie grazioso, lächelnd, besonnen; er vergnügt und spaßhaft, mit Händen, die unaufhörlich mit Kneten, Streicheln und Zusammenfügen beschäftigt waren..." Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 63.

She did not distinguish between washing dishes and writing poetry, embroidery and shining shoes. Every activity merited the same regard and commitment. This utter adaption to the moment made it possible for her to perform eccentric dances at night and then by day to very seriously pursue her office as teacher at the arts and crafts school. She had not the slightest difficulty in reconciling the role of housewife with that of an avant-garde artist.¹⁸

The relationship between Taeuber and Arp, however, which appeared so eminently suitable and productive to their friends, put Taeuber into a position similar to Werefkin's. Like Werefkin, who not only inspired and promoted but also supported Jawlensky financially and artistically, Taeuber provided the main financial support for Arp; she organized the massive collection of objects and materials they amassed, brought home from the school colored papers and other artistic materials, and let him use the tools available at the school. She even executed a good number of his works. In an exhibition at the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg in Zurich in November 1916, eleven textile works by Arp were shown, eight of which had been executed by Taeuber.¹⁹

Her main achievement lay in her intuitive understanding of Arp and her translation of his ideas into something doable.... If he was curious as to how an effect would be perceived in another medium, she would grab her sewing kit and thimble and cheerfully and meticulously embroider away until exactly the desired effect had been achieved.²⁰

18 "Sie machte keinen Unterschied zwischen Geschirrspülen und Dichten, Sticken und Schuheputzen. Jede Tätigkeit verdiente gleich viel Aufmerksamkeit und Hingabe. Diese vollendete Anpassung an den Augenblick befähigte sie, nachts exzentrische Tänze vorzuführen und am Tage sehr ernsthaft ihr Lehramt an der Kunstgewerbeschule zu versehen. Ihr machte es nicht die geringste Mühe, die Rolle der Hausfrau mit der einer avantgardistischen Künstlerin in Einklang zu bringen." Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 61.

19 Roswitha Mair, *Handwerk und Avantgarde. Das Leben der Künstlerin Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (Crafts and Avant-garde: The Life of the Artist Sophie Taeuber-Arp) (Berlin, Parthas, 2013), 76.

20 "... ihr Hauptverdienst lag darin, Arp unmittelbar zu verstehen und seine Ideen ins Machbare zu übersetzen. Wollte er etwas zu Malerisches an seinen Werken überleben, so brachte sie ihm alsbald, zweifellos aus ihrer Schule, massenhaft Papier in allen Farben. Fand er, daß die Schere beim Schneiden noch zuviel persönliche Merkmale des Künstlers verriet, so verschaffte sie ihm den präzisionsmechanischen Schnitt einer Papierschneidemaschine. War er neugierig, wie sich ein Effekt bei der Übertragung auf andere Mittel



FIGURE 4.8
Hilla Rebay, photograph

In late 1915, Arp became involved with another artist who went on to play an influential role in the history of European modernism—non-objective art, in particular: Baroness Hilla Rebay von Ehrenwiesen (1890–1967, fig. 4.8). Like Arp, Rebay was from Alsace; she came from an aristocratic officer’s family based in Strasbourg and received a rather traditional artistic training at the Arts and Crafts School in Cologne, beginning in 1908–09, and the Académie Julian in Paris in 1909–10. Her interest in modern art she acquired while living in Munich, in 1910–13, and in Berlin in 1913. In December 1915, Rebay traveled to Zurich, where she became acquainted with Hans Arp, who immediately fell in love with her. Rebay and Arp kept up a long-distance relationship until 1917, and in his passionate letters to her, which are preserved at the Guggenheim Museum, he pleaded his only love to her: “Do not disappoint me. I do not believe that you will ever be happy with someone else. I have never written so to a woman before.”²¹

Arp introduced Rebay to the works of Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Franz Marc, and others and connected her with Herwarth Walden’s

ausnehmen würde, so holte sie ihr Nähzeug und den Fingerhut und stichelte fröhlich und peinlich genau darauflos, bis das Gewünschte fertig war.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 63.

21 “... ich liebe Dich so wie ich nur einen Menschen lieben kann. (...) Enttäusche mich nicht. Ich glaube nie dass Du mit einem anderen glücklich würdest. Ich habe noch nie einer Frau so geschrieben. (...) Kannst Du nicht bald zu mir kommen. Ich muss Dich sprechen.” Mair, *Handwerk und Avantgarde*, 84.

Sturm Galerie in Berlin. Through Arp, she turned to non-representational art and took up collage.²² In May 1917, she participated in a group show at the DADA gallery in Zurich and, in December 1917, one of her woodcuts appeared on the cover of the DADA magazine. At the Sturm Galerie, Rebay met Walden's assistant, Rudolf Bauer, in 1917, who became the main focus of her attention, care, and obsessions.

In 1927, Rebay relocated to New York, where she was introduced to the industrialist Solomon R. Guggenheim, who commissioned her to paint his portrait. In Guggenheim, she found an open-minded and generous patron of the arts who made it possible for her in the following twenty years to assemble a remarkable collection of abstract works of art, particularly the work of Kandinsky and Bauer. Guided by Rebay's expertise and her access to various artistic networks, Guggenheim acquired numerous works by contemporary European and American abstract artists. Their mutual trust and admiration became not only the basis for a remarkable art collection, but also for the construction of one of the most innovative museum buildings in the Western world.

Unlike Rebay, whose affair with Arp was relatively short-lived, the young woman artist who entered the lives of Werefkin and Jawlensky, first in St. Prex and then in Zurich and Ascona, stayed to play a lasting role. This was Emmy Esther Scheyer (1889–1945, fig. 4.9), who succeeded Werefkin (thirty years her senior) as the second woman in Jawlensky's life to give up her own artistic career in order to promote his work. Scheyer came from a middle-class Jewish family in Braunschweig and had studied painting, sculpture, music, and languages in various European cities, including Munich, London, Paris, and Brussels. From 1912 to 1914, she was a part of the circle around the post-Impressionist painter Gustav Lehmann, who was active in Braunschweig and Munich.

In 1916, Scheyer first encountered Jawlensky's work, specifically his painting *Der Buckel* (The Hunchback), which deeply affected her. Paul Bachrach, father of the expressionist dancer Lotte Bara, subsequently arranged for Scheyer to meet the artist; she visited him in St. Prex and, in May 1917, followed Jawlensky

22 Sigrid Faltin, *Die Baroness und das Guggenheim. Hilla von Rebay—eine deutsche Künstlerin in New York* (The Baroness and the Guggenheim: Hilla von Rebay—a German Artist in New York) (Lengwil: Libelle, 2005), 35–88; Brigitte Salmen, “The Path to Non-objective Art,” in Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Brigitte Salmen, and Karole Vail, eds., *Art of Tomorrow: Hilla von Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2005), 60–73; Thalia Vrachopoulos, John Angeline, *Hilla Rebay, Art Patroness and Founder of the Guggenheim Museum of Art* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 23–48.



FIGURE 4.9 *Emmy Scheyer and Alexei Jawlensky, c. 1919, photograph*
THE NORTON SIMON MUSEUM ARCHIVES

to Zurich; a close friendship soon developed between the two. As a sign of their friendship and “bonding of souls,” Jawlensky painted for Scheyer, in 1917, a second, smaller version of *The Hunchback*—a painting that was to accompany her throughout her life. The same year, Jawlensky began working on his mystical heads, a series of stylized women’s heads strongly influenced by Scheyer’s features. After Jawlensky moved with his family from Zurich to Ascona in April 1918, Scheyer visited him there often. In Ascona, Jawlensky continued to work on his variations and mystical heads and Scheyer wrote poems about his art.

In light of Jawlensky’s complicated family situation and under pressure from her family, Scheyer returned to Germany in 1919 and became Jawlensky’s impresario. She promoted the artist and a market for his work in Germany; the resulting exhibitions, in connection with lectures and appropriate press coverage, were meant to clear the way for the publication of a monograph as well as sales of his work.²³ Between 1919 and 1924, Scheyer established contacts with

23 E.E. Scheyer, “Alexej von Jawlensky,” *Das Kunstblatt*, 6 (June 1920), 161–171; E.E. Scheyer, *Alexey von Jawlensky*, exhibition brochure, 1920–21. See also Angelica Jawlensky, “I have entrusted my art to her’: Emmy Scheyer and Alexej von Jawlensky—A Friendship,” in

numerous museum directors and art dealers all over Germany and organized a traveling exhibition of Jawlensky's paintings. As a result of her efforts and the successful sale of a number of Jawlensky's works in Wiesbaden, the artist relocated there in 1922.

When, in the fall of 1923, Scheyer received an invitation to come to the United States, she decided that she would represent not only Jawlensky's work but also that of the newly founded association of the Blue Four, consisting of Feininger, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee.²⁴ She promoted the works of the artists through exhibitions and lectures, first in New York, then in San Francisco in the 1920s, and in Hollywood in the 1930s.

Despite Scheyer's arrival, it was Werefkin who arranged the family's move from Zurich to Ascona after Jawlensky fell gravely ill with the Spanish flu. Ascona was known for its mild climate and had been a refuge for artists for quite some time, but it also promised a more affordable life after Werefkin and Jawlensky had lost their sources of income. Besides Werefkin and Jawlensky, Emmy Hennings, Hugo Ball, and the painters Arthur Segal, Ernst Frick, and Hans Looser also lived there (fig. 4.10). The center of artistic activities in Ascona was the art school on Monte Verità, which had been established by Rudolf von Laban in 1913. Although the artists kept a healthy distance from the "Naturmenschen" on Monte Verità, Laban's dance students, together with the Dadaists, organized choral festivals, masquerades, and other events during the summer months, and Sophie Taeuber performed with them.

Opinions about Ascona differed greatly. Claire Goll characterized it as a paradise:

Ascona, on the shore of Lake Maggiore, truly seemed to us like a village from another star. Spanning the main street, through the center of the village, were grape vines, from which one only had to pluck the muscadine grapes. Everywhere grew sweet chestnuts, corn and tomatoes. You could

The Blue Four: Feininger, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee in the New World, ed. Vivian Endicott Barnett and Josef Helfenstein (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 63–78; Marian Steinsteinfeld, "Denn Jawlensky hat in Wiesbaden einen fabelhaften Erfolg! Zu der von Galka Scheyer 1920–1923 organisierten Ausstellungstournee," in *Jawlensky. Meine liebe Galka!*, ed. Volker Rattemeyer and Renate Petzinger (Wiesbaden: Museum Wiesbaden, 2004), 169–185.

- 24 Galka E. Scheyer, Letter to Alexei Jawlensky, April 10, 1924, in Wünsche, *The Blue Four*, 47. See also Vivian Endicott Barnett, "The Founding of the Blue Four and their Presentation in New York 1924–1925" in *The Blue Four: Feininger, Jawlensky, Kandinsky, and Klee in the New World*, ed. Vivian Endicott Barnett and Josef Helfenstein (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 15–27.



FIGURE 4.10 *Boat Trip on Lago Maggiore, Ascona, 1919, photograph (in the boat: Helene Nesnakomoff, Allander Streng, Lette Heinemann, Emmy Scheyer, Alexei Jawlensky, Ernst Frick)*

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live from the fruit of the land. Money seemed to be a superfluous concept here. Unbeknownst to us, we were in Paradise.²⁵

Hugo Ball, on the other hand, found it rather uninteresting when he reported to Tristan Tzara:

You ask about Ascona. A place with no comforts, where it is currently impossible to rent a room. A bunch of dim-witted nature lovers in sandals and Roman tunics wandering about. No diversions or entertainment, no books, no newspapers. Only nice weather.²⁶

25 “Ascona am Lago Maggiore erschien uns wirklich wie ein Ort auf einem anderen Stern. Die Hauptstraße, die mitten durchs Dorf führt, war von Weinlauben überspannt, von denen man die Muskatellertrauben nur noch abpflücken mußte. Überall wuchsen Edelkastanien, Mais und Tomaten. Man konnte von den Früchten des Landes leben. Das Geld schien hier ein überflüssiger Begriff. Wir waren im Paradies, ohne es zu wissen.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 67–68.

26 “Sie fragen mich nach Ascona. Das ist ein Ort ohne jeden Komfort, wo man momentan kaum ein Zimmer mieten kann. Es gibt eine Menge schlafblöder Naturmenschen, die in Sandalen und römischer Tunica wandeln. Es gibt keine Unterhaltung, keine Bücher,

Jawlensky was pleased with the move and later wrote: “We had a very lovely place with a garden directly on the lake. It was on the edge of Ascona. Next to it began the Campagna [landscape], and this Campagna was enchantingly beautiful, like a dream.”²⁷ In other respects, however, the enchantment was less dreamlike: Scheyer’s presence made the already tense family relationship more so, and the disagreements and fighting soon were obvious to everyone. Claire Goll later reported: “The run-down little castle where they lived in Ascona echoed from morning to evening with the quarrel of their voices. Eventually things would go so far that the Grandseigneur Jawlenski repudiated Werefkin and married the cook.”²⁸ Jawlensky left for Wiesbaden; Helene, Werefkin’s maid and the mother of Jawlensky’s son—“the cook”—soon followed and they were married in 1922. Scheyer moved on to the United States in 1924, and Werefkin remained the rest of her life in Ascona.

Like most of their male colleagues, the women artists discussed here found themselves sooner or later in (involuntary) exile in Switzerland during the First World War. Switzerland provided them with a safe haven, but its restrictive policies on immigration and conservative artistic and cultural climate did not make for an easy transition. Removed from the artistic avant-garde circles of Munich and Berlin, the struggle to maintain their artistic careers and personal independence became even greater. Difficult financial situations and an uncertain social status forced many of them to take up odd jobs to secure a living—e.g., Werefkin working as a stage manager for von Derp and Sacharoff and Henning taking up with the “first available” vaudeville troupe. The professional and personal uncertainties of an exile existence in Switzerland brought increased dependence on male partners and colleagues; already difficult personal relationships often became further strained. The need for social stability and financial security is attested to by the marriages concluded during this period and shortly thereafter, e.g., Clotide von Derp and Alexander Sacharoff (Zurich 1919), Emmy Henning and Hugo Ball (Tessin 1920), and Claire and Ivan Goll (Paris 1921).

keine Zeitungen. Es gibt nur schönes Wetter.” Hugo Ball, Letter to Tristan Tzara, Ascona, September 15, 1916, in Ball and Emmy Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, 99.

27 “Wir hatten eine sehr schöne Wohnung mit einem Garten direkt am See. Es war das letzte Haus von Ascona. Gleich daneben fing die Campagna an, und diese Campagna war bezaubernd schön wie ein Traum.” Alexej von Jawlensky: *Lebenserinnerungen*, 119.

28 “Das auffällige Schloßchen, das sie in Ascona bewohnten, schallte vom Morgen bis zum Abend von zankenden Stimmen. Eines Tages sollte es so weit kommen, daß der Grandseigneur Jawlenski die Werefkin verstieß und die Köchin heiratete.” Goll, *Ich verzeihe keinem*, 73.

As the diary notes and memories from this period in Switzerland suggest, the networks the women artists established remained informal and even tentative, and tended to arise along national lines such as the Russian colony in Lausanne or the German pacifists in Geneva. Only towards the end of the war, did the urban environment of Zurich gradually begin to draw together many of the artists and intellectuals in exile and then become an international basis for artistic collaboration and cultural exchange.

PART 2

Crossing National, Cultural, and Gender Borders



The Cosmopolitan Approach as a Constituent Aspect of Modernist Thought

Tanja Malycheva

Abstract

This essay explores Werefkin's drive to question societal rules and neglect gender roles and discusses her constant longing for knowledge. Werefkin's cultural background and artistic interests are compared to those of Russian painter Valentin Serov. Both artists promoted a cosmopolitan worldview that recognized the primacy of a modernist aesthetic over national affiliations. This cosmopolitan approach also united the women artists in Werefkin's circle and was a constituent aspect of their modernist thinking.

At the age of twenty-eight Marianne Werefkin confessed to her father that she “had never had any of the obsessions of the young society ladies” and was “not afraid to be judged by society which, without having ever given [her] anything, could not claim something in return.”¹ Unlike most of her female contemporaries, Werefkin thought that “an evening gown which allowed every society member to thoroughly analyze you with a connoisseur's eye as if you were a horse being offered for sale” was obscene.² Years later she noted: “I am not a man, I am not a woman, I am myself.”³

To question and to neglect societal rules in general and a woman's role in society in particular was just one mark of Werefkin's modern mind-set; another such was her constant longing for knowledge. The foundation of this

1 “[...] меня не мучит ни один из тех бесов, которые сидят в бальных годках светских барышень [...] меня не страшит суд общества—оно мне ничего не дало и никаких требований на меня налагать не может [...]” Marianne Werefkin, letter to her father, August 10, 1888, in Laima Laučkaitė, *Ekspresionizmo raitelė Mariana Veriovkina* (Expressionist Rider Marinna Veriovkina) (Vilius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2007), 208–210.

2 “Что касается до моих туалетов, то об этом и говорить не стоит. По-моему неприличен бальный туалет, где каждый член общества с видом знатока анализирует вас по статьям, как продажную лошадь [...]” Ibid.

3 “Je ne suis ni hommes, ni femme, je suis moi.” Marianne Werefkin, statement of 1905, in Marianne Werefkin, *Lettre à un Inconnu. Aux sources de l'expressionnisme* (Letters to a Stranger. Expressionist Sources), ed. Gabrielle Dufour-Kowalska (Paris: Klincksieck 2005), 171.

progressive mind was Werefkin's versatile education and her acquired ability to adjust to foreign environments. Due to her father's military career, she grew up between Tula, Vitebsk, Vilnius, and Lublin. Initially, she was educated at home, receiving both music and drawing lessons; from 1872 to 1876, she attended a young women's institute in Vilnius.⁴ Beginning in 1880, Werefkin spent most of her time in Moscow, where she became a guest student at Lomonosov University and avidly absorbed the philosophy lectures of Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), whose teachings had a profound impact on many future modern artists. Furthermore, she took private painting lessons with *peredvizhniki's* leading authority, Ilya Repin (1844–1930), and, in 1883, enrolled in Illarion Pryanishnikov's (1840–1894) painting course at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.

After her mother's death, in 1885, Werefkin followed her father to St. Petersburg and resumed her lessons with Repin, who had moved to the capital three years earlier.⁵ Through his weekly gatherings, she became acquainted with influential representatives of the Russian *intelligentsia* and soon started her own salon in her living quarters at the Peter and Paul fortress, where her father was a commanding officer. Igor Grabar (1871–1960), who met Werefkin in 1894, later remembered that among his acquaintances she was the first to mention the names of Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler.⁶ According to Grabar, Werefkin “took out a subscription of all the latest [foreign] art magazines” and “enlightened” her “less versed... [guests] by reading aloud extracts from the new writings on art.”⁷

4 For biographical data see: Bernd Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin* (München: Hirmer, 2001), 13–21, 23–27; Brigitte Roßbeck, “Marianne Werefkin. Ihr Leben im Russischen Reich, in Deutschland, in der Schweiz” (Marianne Werefkin. Her Life in the Russian Empire, in Germany, in Switzerland), in *Marianne Werefkin. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin. From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), exh. cat. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie; Bremen: Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, 2014), 8.

5 Even if Werefkin had wished to enroll in the Imperial Academy of Art, it would not have been possible because the institution was not yet admitting female students in 1885. According to Natalia L. Priymak, the first few female “guest students” were admitted to the Academy in the second half of the 1880s; 1887 is the earliest date mentioned by her, see Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskiye zapiski* (Autobiographical Notes), vol. 1, ed. by Natalya L. Priymak (Moscow: Izobrazitelnoye iskusstvo 1974), 61 and 549, footnote 39.

6 “Здесь я впервые услышал имена Эдуарда Мане, Клода Мона, Ренуара, Дега, Уистлера [...]” Igor Grabar, *Moya zhizn. Avtomonografia* (My Life. Autobiography) (Moscow: Respublika 2001) (1935), 96.

7 “Блестяще владея иностранными языками [...] она выписывала все новейшие издания по искусству и просвещала нас, мало по этой части искушенных, читая нам вслух выдержки из последних новинок по литературе об искусстве.” *Ibid.*

Being fluent in English, French, German, Polish, Lithuanian (and later Italian), Werefkin became an agent of intercultural exchange long before her departure to Munich in 1896. By directing the attention of her audience to the impressionists, tonalists and symbolists, she decisively challenged the national sentiments and naturalistic approach in art favored by Repin and his *peredvizhniki* colleagues. The *peredvizhniki* had held claim to the position of reformers in the Russian art scene ever since its separation from the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1863; its members were too self-righteous to realize that the endless replications of their beloved national narratives inevitably led to artistic stagnation.

In calling the attention of her guests to achievements in the contemporary Western art world, Werefkin was adopting modernist ideas introduced in Russia around 1890 by the young artists Valentin Serov (1865–1911), Mikhail Vrubel (1856–1910), and Konstantin Korovin (1861–1939). Interestingly, Werefkin had much in common with Serov, whose oeuvre marks the beginning of Russian modernism and is one of the most striking examples of the artistic links between Russia and Western Europe forged before World War I. Both artists were well educated in European art, music, and languages, and were also constantly on the move during their childhood and adolescence; as a result, they were well exposed to diverse cultural trends and social environments. The two were Repin's private pupils, yet despite his direct influence neither followed his path of realism, choosing instead to pursue “decadent” art, with Serov joining Sergei Diaghilev's *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art, 1899) and *Ballets Russes* (1909), and Werefkin moving to Munich (1896), where she co-founded the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich, 1909), which prefigured *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). In their work, Werefkin and Serov promoted the primacy of the modernist aesthetics over national affiliations; they were open to the world in an artistic and interpersonal sense that left no room for geographical borders and national frontiers. This sense of cosmopolitanism—the conscious awareness of belonging to various cultures and artistic traditions—was a constituent component of their artistic developments.⁸

It is therefore consistent with her own aesthetic development that Werefkin wholeheartedly supported the continuation of her theoretical and Alexei Jawlensky's practical artistic education abroad. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Munich, with its noted art academy, many private art schools, large collections of Old Masters and antiquities, and countless contemporary galleries and international exhibitions, was an important artistic center, second only to Paris. Anton Ažbe's art school—frequented by Grabar, Jawlensky,

8 In contrast to their Salon colleagues, who were just as cosmopolitan but followed above all market demands, they courageously explored new, unconventional pictorial formulas.

Kandinsky, Elena Luksch-Makowsky, and others—was one of the most popular meeting places for young international students. Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, who came to Munich in May 1901, noted that at Ažbe's school one encountered “people from all over the world: Italians, Americans, French, even Negros [...] and quite a large number of Russians.”⁹ Indeed, criteria such as nationality, race, social class, or gender played no role in the admission process. It was rather talent, perseverance, and the ability to pay the fee.

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Bavarian capital nourished Werefkin's ambitions to promote a modernization of art and aesthetics. Shortly after her arrival, she started a salon that was to become far more influential in terms of exchange and networking between progressive international artists, collectors, entrepreneurs, and theoreticians than Ažbe's school or any other private institution in Munich around 1900. Gustav Pauli (1866–1938), the first director of the Kunsthalle Bremen, maintained vivid memories of his visits to Werefkin's gatherings:

Along with Munich's established artistic community that was basking in its success, a young opposition was flourishing in the shadows, like a communist conspiracy in the midst of a bourgeois society. [...] The focal point of this world [...] was the salon of baroness Werefkin. She was an internationally educated daughter of a Russian general, a woman of sophistication and an eloquent critic. A group of her followers—Russian artists for the most part, among them the dancer Sacharoff and her Munich friends—gathered daily around her table. It was quite an omnium-gatherum, a place where the Bavarian aristocracy met the travelling people of the international Bohemia. [...] Never again did I encounter a community charged with such tension. The baroness was the center and, in a manner of speaking, the transmitter, as it were, of waves of force that one could almost physically sense.¹⁰

9 “В школе Ашбе, где я работаю, люди со всей земли: итальянцы, американцы, франц[узы] даже негры [...] русских довольно много.” Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, letter from Munich to his mother Anna Petrova-Vodkina, May 23, 1901, in *K.S. Petrov-Vodkin. Pisma. Statyi. Vystupleniya. Dokumenty* (K.S. Petrov-Vodkin. Letters. Articles. Speeches. Documents) (Moscow: Sovetsky khudozhnik, 1991), 61, no. 53.

10 “Neben der bekannten Münchner Kunstwelt, die sich in ihren Erfolgen sonnte, blühte im Schatten die Opposition der Jugend, etwa so wie eine kommunistische Verschwörung inmitten einer bürgerlichen Gesellschaft [...] In dieser Welt [...] bildete der Salon der Baronin Werefkin einen Mittelpunkt. Sie war die international erzogene Tochter eines russischen Generals, weltgewandt und kritisch beredt. Um ihren Teetisch sammelte sich täglich das Grüpplein ihrer Getreuen, zumeist russische Künstler, u.a. auch der Tänzer

The heated arguments about new directions in art, which took place in this salon, promoted experimentation and individualism and brought about a new Expressionist language. Even though Werefkin resumed her own artistic practice only in 1906, the ideas she set down in her *Lettres à un Inconnu* (Letters to an Unknown, 1901–05) reveal how modern her concept of painting was:

The more that formulas of the real are transformed into formulas of the unreal, the greater is the work of art. The one who is able to transform a visual impression into a color melody is a master of vision. The one who can transform a visual impression into a poetic word has apprehended the soul of this impression. The one who is able to transform a visible impression by simple means of a color melody in order to realize all his thoughts has mastered his own self.¹¹

Such modern ideas anticipated Kandinsky's lyrical abstraction, yet were less than welcome among the traditionalists. The rift between the "Amazon of the Blaue Reiter",¹² Werefkin, and her former mentor Repin exemplifies the schism between the pan-European modernist trends and the national realist schools. On Werefkin's visit to St. Petersburg in 1899, Repin complained angrily about "all those Diaghilevs and Co., and all those Munich [artists]" all of whom looked to him "like grinning monkeys, like some kind of illness."¹³ Even though

Sacharaoff, und ihre Münchner Freunde, eine ziemlich bunte Gesellschaft, in der sich die bayerische Aristokratie mit dem fahrenden Volk der internationalen Boheme begegnete. [...] Nie wieder habe ich eine Gesellschaft kennengelernt, die mit solchen Spannungen beladen war. Das Zentrum, gewissermaßen die Senderstelle der fast physisch spürbaren Kräfterwellen, war die Baronin." Gustav Pauli, *Erinnerungen aus sieben Jahrzehnten* (Memoires from Seven Decades) (Tübingen: Wunderlich Verlag, 1936), 264–265.

11 "Plus [il y a] de formules du réel changées en formules irréal, plus l'œuvre est grande. Celui qui rend une impression visuelle par un chant de couleurs est maître de la vision. Celui qui rend l'impression visuelle par un mot de poème est maître de l'âme de l'impression. Celui qui, de la simple donnée d'une impression visuelle, au simple moyen d'un chant de couleurs, fait la réalisation de toute sa pensée est maître de lui-même." Marianne Werefkin, statement of 1904, in Werefkin, *Lettre à un Inconnu*, 146.

12 The title "Des Blauen Reiterreiterin"—English translation "The Amazon of the Blaue Reiter"—was given to Werefkin by Else Lasker-Schüler in her letter to Werefkin in 1913, in Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin*, 185.

13 "Ах, какое это искусство, как ненавижу я этих Дягелевых и Ко., да и всех ваших мюнхенцев. Все это только гримасы обезьяны, какая-то болезнь." Marianne Werefkin quoting Repin in her letter to Jawlensky, Tsarskoye Selo—Munich, March 1899, in Laučkaitė, *Ekspressionizmo raitelė Mariana Veriovkina*, 215.

Repin lived in Paris from 1873 to 1876 and was a member of Savva Mamontov's Abramtsevo circle, he considered himself "a child of the 1860s–1870s," times when "painting and virtuosity were rejected as most unnecessary vices," when "idea, meaning, life [...] and truth were of the highest value."¹⁴ For Werefkin, however, life was "only the starting point of [many] deviations of the creative genius."¹⁵ She agreed that the "truly fresh" work of art was "to originate from precise observation of nature," yet for her the "means to reproduce this received impression" had to be "individual and independent from the existing forms."¹⁶ According to Werefkin, "art is not to see or to think, it is to feel. The artistic vision is to be an internal vision, without logic of a physical or habitual vision."¹⁷

It is undeniable that Repin's socially critical subjects as well as his skillful arrangements of the pictorial space profoundly influenced Werefkin's work despite the disagreements between the two artists. The theme and the composition of Repin's *Burlaki na Volge* (Barge Haulers on the Volga, 1873, fig. 5.1), for example, are reflected in many of her pictures, among them *Sonnenaufgang* (*Sunrise*, undated, fig. 5.2), which shows a group of fishermen pulling a boat out of the water. At the same time, the differences between these two pictures are striking. Repin documents the scene in a naturalistic style that confronts the viewer with the genuine hardships of their work in order to raise compassion and indignation. To enhance the realist impression (and thus to dissolve the border between the pictorial space and the space of the beholder), he portrays each hauler and the rags they are wearing in meticulous detail. Werefkin uses an aggressive palette of blue, green, orange, red, and yellow and applies the color in long directional strokes, distorting the forms as if they were seen through a wide-angle lens. The depersonalized figures of the fishermen are reduced to small spider-like silhouettes that merge into the dangerously glowing landscape; their strained posture is mirrored in the bent trees and the mountains around them. The line of men are joined together by the rope they pull

14 "Я все же художник и дитя 60–70-х годов. Живопись, виртуозность отрицались тогда как самый негодный порок. Выше всего ставилиась идея, смысл, жизнь [...] правда." Repin in a letter to Werefkin, from Zdravnevo, August 20, 1895, in *I. Repin. Izbrannye pisma v dvukh tomakh. 1867–1930* (I. Repin. Selected Letters in Two Volumes. 1867–1930), vol. 2 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1969), 107.

15 "La vie ne sert alors que comme point de départ aux déviations du génie créateur." Werefkin, statement in 1903, in Werefkin, *Lettre à un Inconnu*, 111.

16 "Un art vraiment jeune et frais doit être basé sur une observation précise de la nature. Les moyens de rendre l'impression reçue doivent être personnels et indépendants des formes existant." Werefkin, statement in 1904, in Werefkin, *Lettre à un Inconnu*, 144–145.

17 "L'art, ce n'est pas voir ou penser, c'est sentir. La vision artistique doit être une vision interne, sans la logique de la vision physique et habituelle." Werefkin, statement in 1905, in Werefkin, *Lettre à un Inconnu*, 153.

as if linked by fate, as if generation after generation they have carried the same heavy burden of life on their shoulders. It is evident that Werefkin not only uses a modernist language but also strives for the subordination of national agendas to universal themes.



FIGURE 5.1 *Ilya Repin, Barge Haulers on the Volga, 1873, oil on canvas, 131.5 × 281 cm*
STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 5.2 *Marianne Werefkin, Sunrise, undated, tempera on paper on cardboard, 47 × 61.5 cm*
FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA,
ASCONA

It was not long before the reports about “Mrs. Werefkin, Grabar, Kandinsky and Jawlensky who were experimenting with exquisitely colorful effects”¹⁸ reached young artists back in Russia and encouraged them to cross the borders too, in a literal as well a figurative sense. This news, for example, most likely influenced Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878–1967) in her decision to leave St. Petersburg for Munich instead of Paris in 1898. She even tried, though unsuccessfully, to convince Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva (1871–1955), her fellow student from Repin’s class at the Academy, to do the same.¹⁹

In fact, Werefkin’s wide network included many women artists who tried to manoeuvre in the male-dominated art world, among them Erma Bossi, Olga Della-Vos-Kardovskaya, Emmy Dressler, Elisabeth Epstein, Elizaveta Kruglikova, Maria Marc, and Gabriele Münter,²⁰ opera singer Olga Hartman, Expressionist poet and graphic artist Else Lasker-Schüler, symbolist poet and playwright Zinaida Gippius,²¹ the *Ballets Russes* dancers Anna Pavlova and Tamara Karsavina, and the *Bubnovy Valet* (Jack of Diamonds) members Natalia Goncharova²² and Alexandra Exter.²³ Despite their personal differences these female artists were united by the universal idea of challenging the realist

18 “Zu dieser Zeit fuhren einige Schüler der Akademie nach München, erzählten von Frau Werefkina, Grabar, von Kandinsky und Jawlensky, die dort experimentierten mit farbenprächtigen Effekten. Die Tradition dieser Begeisterung für München ging von Serow aus [...]” Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Kindheits- und Jugenderinnerungen 1878–1900* (Memoires About Childhood and Adolescence) (Hamburg: Hower Verlag, 1989), 113.

19 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskiye zapiski*, 117.

20 Werefkin obviously stayed in touch with Kruglikova who lived in Paris from 1895 to 1914. See Alexandr Benois, *Moi vospominaniya* (My Memories) (Moscow: Zakharov, 2005), 1454–1455; Mara Folini, ed., *Artisti russi in Svizzera: Marianne Werefkin (Tula 1860–Ascona 1938)* (Russian Artists in Switzerland: Marianne Werefkin (Tula 1860–Ascona 1938), exh. cat. (Florence: Alias, 2010), 305.

21 Werefkin became acquainted with Zinaida Gippius (1869–1945) and other *Mir iskusstva* members no later than 1899, during her visit to St. Petersburg. There she also saw the first exhibition of the group.

22 The first indirect encounter between Werefkin, Gontcharova, and Exter took place during the first Jack of Diamonds exhibition in Moscow (Dec. 1910–Jan. 1911) in which also members of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* showed their works. It is not clear, however, whether Werefkin met both artists in person.

23 For details on the connections between Werefkin and other women artists see Tanja Malycheva, “Grenzüberschreitungen. Die kosmopolitischen Künstlerinnen im Umfeld Marianne Werefkins” (Crossing Borders. The Cosmopolitan Women Artists in the Circle of Marianne Werefkin), in *Marianne Werefkin: Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), exh. cat. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie; Bremen: Paula-Modersohn-Becker Museum, 2014), 168–211.

tradition and promoting a renewal of the arts. Being part of a heterogeneous, multicultural community was an important aspect of their life concepts. The spiritual home of these women artists was modernism rather than a single nation-state. They passionately absorbed foreign trends in art and culture and transformed these into something new and original in their own right, beyond the limits of a nationalist perspective. This cosmopolitan approach was a constituent aspect of their modernist thinking.

Women Artists of Marianne Werefkin's Circle: Sisters or Rivals? The Case of Vera Abegg-Verevkine

Laima Surgailienė-Laučkaitė

Abstract

Unpublished letters of Marianne Werefkin from the National Martynas Mažvydas Library in Vilnius provide insight into Werefkin's early formative years in Lithuania and Poland. These early experiences, in largely hostile environments, taught her how to live in a multi-cultural milieu. Werefkin's personal relationships with other women artists were complicated by her experiences with the male artists she admired most: the painters Ilya Repin and Alexei Jawlensky. Discussion centers on Werefkin's contacts with the artist Vera Abegg, covering her time in St. Petersburg and Munich, and reveals Werefkin's views on the role of woman in art.

My research on Marianne Werefkin's life and work, including numerous articles and a book, are based on the extensive correspondence between Marianne Werefkin and her friends and relatives. The letters were kept at Werefkin's family estate Blagodat in Lithuania until the outbreak of World War II and are now maintained in the Manuscript Department of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.¹ Werefkin's letters disclose aspects of her life from the early years into old age; they unveil the development of her individuality, and reflect her thoughts, feelings, relations, and attitudes. In this essay, I wish to briefly address the often complex relationships that existed among the female avant-garde artists, offering as an example the case of Werefkin's relationship with the today little known artist Vera Abegg-Verevkine. But first, let me begin with Werefkin's childhood and youth and emphasize the importance of this period for the formation of her personality. Western art historians tend to overlook or ignore important elements of the future artist's character development due to limited knowledge of the local historical context; in this respect several aspects should be taken into consideration.

1 Pyotr Verefkin Fond, Manuscript Department, Lithuanian National Martynas Mažvydas Library (further LNML MD), Inv. F. 19.

Werefkin spent the first 22 years of her life in Vilnius and Lublin, cities located in the Western province of tsarist Russia. Both were distinguished by their multinational and multicultural character; their inhabitants included Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Belorussians, Russians, Germans, and Karaims; who spoke different languages and practiced different religions—Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Judaism, and other creeds. Growing up in the midst of this multilingual and multicultural milieu, Werefkin learned not only Russian, but also Polish, and could communicate in Lithuanian. Her letters from the Blagodot estate to her father, Vladimir Werefkin, in St. Petersburg contain numerous details of her contacts with local inhabitants, including Polish landlords, Lithuanian peasants, Latvian stewards, Catholic priests, and impoverished Jews. This varied ethnic, cultural, religious environment during the artist's early years certainly must have contributed to a strong sense of tolerance and open-mindedness and enabled Werefkin the artist to easily join the multinational milieu of artists in Munich and to grasp and fully accept modern cosmopolitan Western art.

The second aspect related to the artist's youth is a matter of place and the time. Vilnius and Lublin were located in the western outskirts of tsarist Russia, i.e., in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been taken over and partitioned by Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Prussia in the late eighteenth century. The local population had resisted annexation and fought against the occupiers, and the last large-scale uprising was cruelly suppressed by the tsarist army in 1863, when Werefkin was three years old. Thus, she grew up in a post-revolt period among a population strongly opposed to tsarist Russia and its officials. As the daughter of a tsarist general, she certainly sensed the hostile attitude of the community; nevertheless, she tried to maintain good relationships with the local people and continued the charitable activities of her mother, Elizaveta Werefkin, treating Lithuanian peasants and their children at their estate and providing them with medicine. She strove to maintain friendly relations with the servants, in particular at the family estate. Her father and relatives often reproached her for being too familiar and extravagant with the domestics, but Marianne paid little attention to their concerns, writing in a letter to her father: "Among other things, all these extravagancies of mine have produced unexpected results; having arrived at Blagodot almost as enemies, we are no longer aliens now, but closer to the locals than some of the earlier masters."² Through her behavior Werefkin

2 «Но все мои extravagances имели кроме того результат весьма неожиданный. Все вместе взятые они сделали то, что мы, приехавшие селиться в Благодать почти врагами, теперь не только здесь не чужие, но более свои, чем куча старожитных панов.» Letter

sought to change the negative stance of the local population. The artist's early experiences—her childhood and youth in a “non-genuine” Russia—taught her to perceive herself as “different” and to entrench herself in this society through her capacity for nurturance and empathy, i.e., “a woman's kindness.”³

Werefkin grew up in a traditional Russian aristocratic family, in which family ties were strong. Though she had only brothers and no sisters, much time was spent visiting aunts and uncles and their families. The feeling of sisterhood thus was quite natural for Werefkin; it is clearly seen in photos with her cousin Lidya Werefkin in which they both wear the same uniform dress as if they were sisters. Throughout her life, Werefkin befriended and came to the aid of young women, particularly of other social strata, extending them charity and assistance with living arrangements, marriage plans, employment, and even financial support. These sorts of maternal activities were very typical of the artist.

Werefkin also maintained close ties with many female artists—Erma Bossi, Olga Della-Vos-Kardovskaya, Olga Epishkina, Elisabeth Epstein, Gabriele Münter, and others. Many of them were married to artists, an arrangement that Werefkin especially appreciated, as such artist pairs, in her eyes, were marital partners “united by art.”⁴ Among Werefkin's close friends were the painter Olga della Vos, the wife of the artist Dmitry Kardovsky; Gabriele Münter, partner of Wassily Kandinsky; the musician Lily Klee, wife of Paul Klee, with whom Marianne corresponded regularly during the First World War; and others. Their roles were similar to hers as it was not unusual for female artists to give—or end up giving—priority to the artistic activities of their spouses or partners. Werefkin, for example, was the one who contacted exhibition organizers, dispatched Jawlensky's works to exhibitions, and corresponded with the owners of the galleries. In addition to aiding Jawlensky, Werefkin also acted as an

from Marianne Werefkin to Vladimir Werefkin from Blagodat to St Petersburg, 1888 08 10. LNMML MD, F. 19, b. 1476, l. 9.

3 «Иногда ласковым словом сделаешь больше, чем деньгами». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Vladimir Werefkin from Blagodat to St Petersburg, 1888 08 10. LNMML MD, F. 19, b. 1476, l. 9.

4 «Дмитрий Николаевич [Кардовский] женится на Оле [Олге Делла Вос]. Я в восторге. Грабарь крикнул эту весть в окошко. Он принял ее мрачно. Я рада, рада, рада. Д. женитьба в его искусстве не помешает. Оля тип милой и преданной жены. Она будет за ним ухаживать, у него будет семья, теплый угол. Я чувствую, что мы с тобою еще теснее с ними сойдемся. Грабарь может и потеряет приятеля, а мы выиграем дружественную семью. ... Важно быть вместе, жить одной жизнью, одним делом». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Alexei Jawlensky from Munich to Moscow, 1898, LNMML MD, F 19, b. 1466, l. 41.

intermediary for other artists, e.g., Paris-based Russian artist Elizaveta Kruglikova and Russian Symbolist Viktor Borisov-Musatov.

Female artists such as Werefkin formed a powerful network for the dissemination of avant-garde ideas and were actively engaged in the logistics and distribution of avant-garde works of art. Their contacts were varied and numerous and are worthy of a closer look: What were the stories behind the acquaintances of these artists? Were they always “good sisters” to one another or did rivalries and contests also play a role? The example of Werefkin’s relationship to the Russian artist and once close colleague Vera Abegg-Verevkine (née Abegg) is exemplary. Werefkin first met Abegg-Verevkine in the studio of Ilya Repin in St Petersburg. The celebrated painter usually had some female students, young women of noble birth and well-to-do families who wanted to become artists. The two women soon struck up a friendship; they enthusiastically studied art together and painted together at the Blagodat estate. Vera (Veronika) was younger than Marianne, having been born in 1872; her father Wilhelm Abegg, a Prussian citizen, was married to a Russian Orthodox, lived in St. Petersburg and owned an estate near Kaunas in Lithuania. Abegg-Verevkine studied at the Stieglitz School of Technical Drawing (1832–1909). Through the painter Vasily Mate she was introduced to Repin, who allowed her to work in his studio. Between 1893 and 1895, she was an unofficial student at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, while at the same time continuing private art studies in the studio of artist Ekaterina Zarudnaya. In 1895, Abegg-Verevkine attended the *Zhensky kruzhok pooshchreniya khudozhestv* (Women’s Circle for the Encouragement of the Arts), led by A. Sabanayeva. The Women’s Circle usually met on Wednesdays; in addition to their charitable activities to promote art, they carried on discussions about art, drawing, and painting. The group of participants included the duchess A. Imeretinskaya, Marianne Werefkin, and her friend Lily Lubovitska; Repin also used to attend.

Repin, a respected authority on art, was also known as an admirer of beautiful women and often painted portraits of the female models he fancied. He knew how to pay them compliments; his praise included Werefkin, but even more Abegg-Verevkine, whom he tenderly called “Abochka.” Abegg-Verevkine, in contrast to Werefkin, was a real beauty—tall, slender, black-haired (fig. 6.1)—and Repin signed his letters to her “Your Don Quixote” or “Your Sancho Panza.”⁵ He also praised her skills to Werefkin: “What concerns Abochka, the more I get to know her, the more I admire the brilliance of this nature ... in addition to her outwardly outstanding talent in art, in her soul there is

5 *Репин. Художественное наследство* (Repin: Artistic Heritage), vol. 2 (Москва, Издательство академии наук СССР, 1949), 211–212.



FIGURE 6.1 *Vera Abegg-Verevkine, photograph, c. 1910*
PIERRE GOCHTOVTT COLLECTION, LE MESNIL-SAINT-DENIS

an enormous depth of creative power ...it is a real diamond." Repin discerned in her "a kind of latent layer of poetry" and was "absolutely convinced of the objectivity of [his] view of her."⁶

Repin flirted with many of his female students, thus arousing their envy and anger and turning them into rivals; this is obvious from the correspondence. In July of 1895 in a letter to Werefkin, Repin accused Abegg-Verevkinе of gossiping and regretted having told her about his one unsuccessful work. On the same day, he wrote a letter to Abegg-Verevkinе in which he confessed that he considered her his only dear friend—in contrast to Werefkin, whom he distrusted because she, "like nearly all aristocrats, [was] liable to betrayal and angry irony, which is hidden in the depth of their souls and manifests itself sporadically."⁷ Repin's intrigues led to friction and bitter accusations of gossip between Abegg-Verevkinе and Werefkin; tension between the two artists turned into hatred, destroying their relationship. This was made all the more difficult because Abegg-Verevkinе had caught the attention of Werefkin's young brother Vsevolod, whom she married in 1896. Thus the two became sisters-in-law. Werefkin's disdain for her former friend and colleague, however, was scarcely diminished: "I don't forgive, I forget."⁸

The love triangle involving Werefkin, Abegg-Verevkinе, and Repin marked Werefkin's first experience in personal relations of male and female artists. In

6 «Что касается Абочки, то я, чем больше знакомлюсь с ней, тем больше удивляюсь гениальности этой натуры. [...] Кроме внешнего чудного, блестящего таланта в живописи, в ее душе есть необъятная глубина гения [...]. Вот сущий бриллиант. В ней скрывается какой-то неведомый пласт поэзии [...]. Я уверен в совершенной объективности моего взгляда на нее». Илья Repin, letter to Marianne Werefkin, August 20, 1895, in *Новое о Repине. Статьи и письма художника, воспоминания учеников и друзей, публикации* (News on Repin: Thw artist's articles and letters, reminiscences of students and friends, publications), ed. И.А. Бродский, В.Н. Москвинов (Москва: Художник СССР, 1969), 54.

7 «Да, у меня нет друзей—это совсем, совсем откровенно перед Вами, милый и единственный друг мой (пока я еще в Вас не разочаровался). Мариан[ну] В[ладимировну] я ни единой ноты и ни единого момента не считаю своим другом. Ей ни на волос не верю (это конечно между нами). У всех почти аристократов расположение к предательству и злая ирония; она естественно живет в глубине души и проявляется невольно....», Илья Repin, letter to Vera Abegg, April 7, 1895, in *Репин. Художественное наследство* (Repin: Artistic Heritage), vol. 2 (Москва, Издательство академии наук СССР, 1949), 209.

8 «... я не умею ненавидеть, я не прощаю, я просто—не помню», Marianne Werefkin. letter to Alexei Jawlensky from Kaunas to Munich, 1910, LNMML MD, F 19, b. 1458, l. 4.

Werefkin's eyes, the experience supported the patriarchal stereotype that the woman could not be a good artist because her primary concern was not for art but for the (male) artists—both teachers and colleagues. Early on, Werefkin tended to poorly rank the proficiency of women artists, including her own. In 1899, when Jawlensky, Dmitry Kardovsky, and Igor Grabar decided to set up a private art school in Munich, Werefkin enthusiastically endorsed the idea but with serious reservations: "I strongly support the project, but without female students and with careful screening."⁹ She was convinced that the presence of woman would lower the level of art instruction.

After Werefkin's departure for Munich in 1896, ties to family and relatives gradually weakened; a reunion did not take place until 1909, when she returned home to Russia. She stayed with the family of her older brother, Pyotr Werefkin, governor in Kaunas and met Vsevolod's family, too. Vera and Vsevolod had three children—Nikita, Elizaveta, and Nikolai—who seemed to Werefkin to be rather neglected. "I want to help these children, but V. Vas. is still very distant to me. She lies through her teeth all the time, and I am not going to maintain any sort of relation with her."¹⁰ Her nephew Nikita was sickly, and Werefkin decided to send Vera with Nikita to doctors in Munich and to settle them in her flat. A large collection of correspondence between Werefkin and Jawlensky, extant from this period, attests to the strained relations with Vera.

Werefkin accused her of numerous sins: she allegedly had wasted Vsevolod's inheritance and was all talk—"hypocrisy, lies, whitewash and self-serving."¹¹ Indicating how to receive Vera in Munich, Werefkin instructed Jawlensky to be hospitable to her, but not to help her financially or strike up any sort of friendship: "Dealing with V.V. be coolly polite and never touch upon the past. After all, there is art you can talk about."¹² Thus, art in Werefkin's eyes was the

9 «Я ужасно сочувствую проекту школы, только без учениц и страшно строгий выбор». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Alexei Jawlensky from St. Petersburg to Munich, 1898. LNMMML MD, F 19, b. 1466, l. 19.

10 «Я детям этим хочу помочь, но В[ера] Васил.[евна] останется мне чужая. Она врёт на каждом шагу и я не хочу с ней никаких отношений». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Alexei Jawlensky from Kaunas to Munich, 1910. LNMMML MD, F 19, b. 1459, l. 23.

11 «Вся фальшь и ложь и втирание очков и бесконечная масса интересанства». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Alexei Jawlensky from Kaunas to Munich, 1910. LNMMML MD, F 19, b. 1458, l. 4.

12 «[...] а с В.В. держись тона обязательной вежливости и ни словом не затрагивай прошлого. Есть ведь искусство о котором можно говорить». Marianne Werefkin, letter to Alexei Jawlensky from Kaunas to Munich, 1910. LNMMML MD, F 19, b. 1459, l. 37.



FIGURE 6.2 *Vera Abegg-Verevkine, Nikita's Portrait, c. 1916, oil on canvas*
PIERRE GOCHTOVTT COLLECTION, LE MESNIL-SAINT-DENIS

appropriately neutral subject on the basis of which one could socialize without touching upon personal interests.

During the spring months Vera and Nikita spent in Munich in 1910, Jawlensky painted several expressionist portraits of both of them. His attitude towards Vera was quite different:

My contacts with Vera Vas. are very good and I would be very happy if you too could forget that impulsive act of hers and become friends again—the more so that she is very willing, and in general to my mind she is a good, honest and clever person.¹³

Jawlensky's picture *Mutter von Nikita* (Nikita's Mother, 1910, Kunsthalle in Emden) shows an unhappy woman with big expressive almond eyes and a sad face. Werefkin never forgave her for the experience in St. Petersburg.

What of Abegg-Verevkine's career as an artist? After marriage, she devoted herself to her family and children, only sporadically returning to painting. At first the family lived in Bukhara (Uzbekistan) and then, after 1903, in Lithuania, mainly in Kaunas. During World War I the couple divorced; Vera returned to Russia and served as a nurse in the war hospital. She lived in St. Petersburg and in the nearby Kuokkala, where Repin had a villa. There Abegg-Verevkine met her teacher once again and often kept company with him. In 1916, Repin painted an impressive portrait of her in profile with a luxurious turban hat and plum in the colorful autumn garden (fig. 6.3). The Russian writer Kornei Chukovsky described Vera's charm during her visits in Repin's villa:

[She] was a tall, slender, beautiful woman of impulsive movements and an animated, [but] weary face. Her speech was a certain mixture of spiritual lyricism and refined sarcasm. Only rarely could one hear [a measure of] non-Russian sophistication in her speech... It was evident that Vera Vasilievna had stayed abroad for too long.¹⁴

13 «С Верой Вас.[ильвной] у нас все очень по хорошему и я был бы очень рад чтобы и ты забыла ее невольный поступок и опять сошла бы с нею по хорошему, тем более что она этого так хочет и вообще по моему хороший, честный и умный человек». Alexei Jawlensky, letter to Marianne Werefkin from Munich to Kaunas, 1910. LNMML MD, F 19, b. 2513, l. 110.

14 «То была стройная, высокая, красивая женщина с порывистыми движениями и одухотворенным, усталым лицом. В ее речах была своеобразная смесь душевного лиризма и светской насмешливости. Лишь порою в конструкции этих речей слышалась нерусская, непростая изысканность. Чувствовалось, что Вера Васильевна слишком долго жила за границей». Корней Чуковский, in *Репин. Художественное наследие* (Repin: Artistic Heritage), vol. 2 (Москва: Издательство академии наук СССР, 1949), 185.



FIGURE 6.3
Ilya Repin, Portrait of Vera Verevkine,
 1916, oil on canvas, 65 × 57 cm
 THE PERM PICTURE GALLERY

After the war Abegg-Verevkine returned to Lithuania; in the early twenties she sold the estate at Kaunas and left for France. She lived in Nice, later in Paris, and died in Saint-Andre D'Allas, in 1960. Little of Abegg-Verevkine's work has survived: several early realistic sketches of Bukhara views were in Repin's museum, Penaty, one portrait in the private collection in St. Petersburg. There are some later works, now held in the private and family collections in France, among them an expressive psychological head *An Old Man* (c. 1930, fig. 6.4) and her portrait of her son Nikita; the latter, painted about 1916, is more modern in its color combinations and sketchy style (fig. 6.2). Nikita himself was conscripted into the Russian army and killed shortly afterwards, in 1916.

Repin's prophecy about the gifted artist did not come true: upon her marriage Abegg-Verevkine chose the traditional role of motherhood and family life over painting; her artistic and literary talents remained largely unrealized.

Abegg-Verevkine was not the only female artist with whom Werefkin enjoyed a complex relationship made more difficult by competition for the attention of a male artist. Among her rivals for Jawlensky were the painter Elisabeth Epstein, who looked after Jawlensky during his stay in Paris in 1906; Emmy Scheyer, who patronized Jawlensky and strongly promoted his work after World War I; and others. Thus one must conclude that relationships

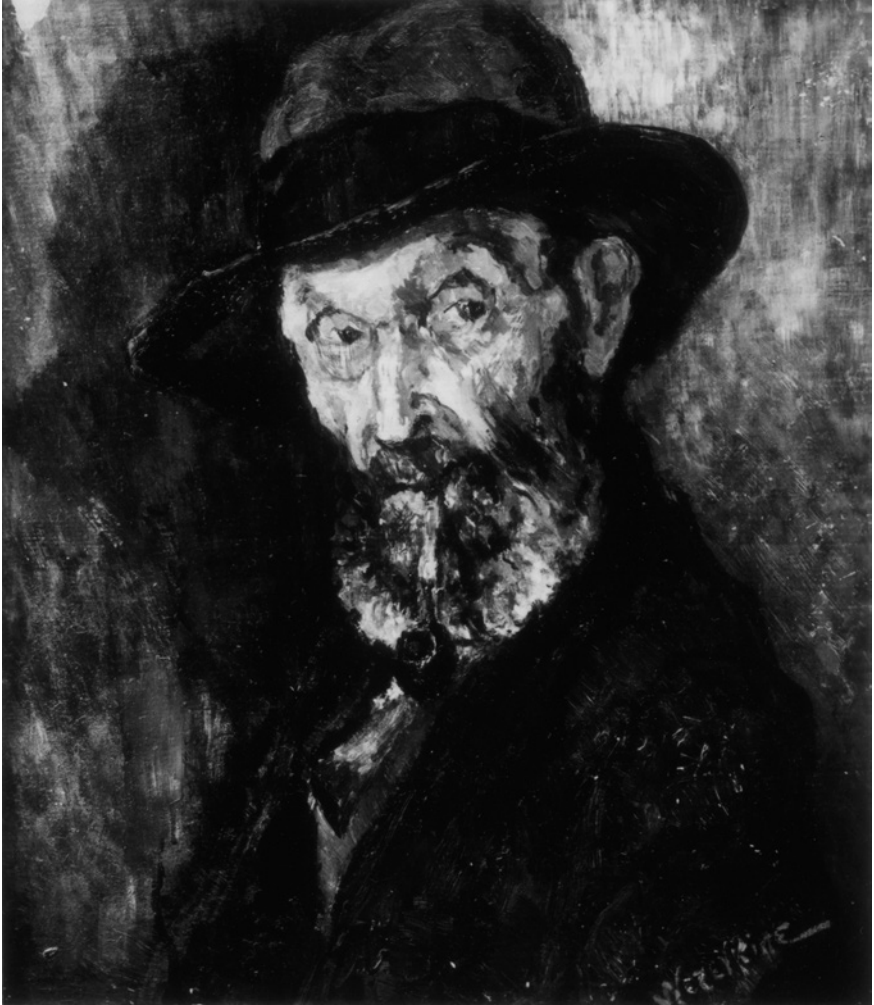


FIGURE 6.4 *Vera Abegg-Verevkine, An Old Man, c. 1930, oil on canvas*
PRIVATE COLLECTION, FRANCE

among female avant-garde artists were “complex,” and could easily range from closest sisterhood and mutual support to bitter rivalries, and that these tensions were as often as not related to issues of sexuality and gender politics, rather than artistic competition.

Performing the Wo/man: The “Interplay” between Marianne Werefkin and Else Lasker-Schüler

Shulamith Behr

Abstract

In 1913, the concept of a “blaue Reiterreiterin” was entertained in the correspondence between the German-Jewish artist, poet, and writer Else Lasker-Schüler and the Munich-based Russian artist Marianne Werefkin. In a poem dedicated to Werefkin, Lasker-Schüler stresses the artist’s Russian origins and childhood emergence as a *Meisterin*. The essay examines how Lasker-Schüler articulated Werefkin’s practices both in terms of their transcultural/national and gendered differences and considers the staging of complex notions of gendered authorship in light of theories of the “third sex.” Relating “child-like play” to the formal elements of creativity, the essay critically evaluates this in relation to both practitioners’ work as well as to Werefkin’s theoretical position in her lecture “Talk on the symbol, the sign and its significance in mystical art” in the School of Art in Vilnius in 1914.

The *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists’ Association Munich, NKVM) attracted not only an international community of artists, dancers, composers, and art historians but also an intriguing number of women exhibitors. Urbanization and modernity, the concomitant rise of the middle classes, and the struggle for emancipation, albeit far short of political equality, were guarantors of women’s engagement in the public sphere. In the case of Marianne Werefkin, this ethos stemmed, on the one hand, from the openness of Russian institutions, where there were more opportunities for women practitioners on professional fronts, including access to academic training thirty years in advance of Germany. On the other hand, on a social front, Werefkin possessed all the advantages of quasi-aristocratic mobility, given her father’s military status, her schooling in French, and travel abroad. Arriving in Munich from St. Petersburg in 1896, she became known as the “Baronin,”¹ and her Giselastraße

1 See Gustav Pauli, *Erinnerungen aus sieben Jahrzehnten* (Memories of seven decades) (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1936), 264–266. For biography, bibliography and discussion of key works see

residence in Schwabing became the hub of the so-called “Russian colony.”² Devoting her first decade in Munich to discourse rather than painting, as well as to the promotion of Alexei Jawlensky, Werefkin’s aura as a “prophetic voice” was established early on in her formation of the Brotherhood of St. Luke in 1897. Unpublished during her lifetime, her journals *Lettres à un Inconnu* (Letters to an Unknown, 1901–05) reveal her theoretical aspirations towards an emotional and non-mimetic art of the future in light of her gendered identity. Hence, in 1909, we are unsurprised to learn of her pivotal role as a founder member of the NKVM and centrality to the utopian and synthesizing aims of the association.

Inevitably, the admission of women to the rank of exhibitors upsets the patriarchal hegemony of avant-garde creativity and introduces new relationships of power between people in the group.³ But, by late 1911, the public profile of the exhibiting group *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) had eclipsed that of the NKVM and altered its previously favorable gender balance. For various reasons, neither Werefkin’s nor Jawlensky’s works were included in the initial *Blaue Reiter* exhibitions. In October 1912, however, they participated in a large exhibition that opened at the premises of the *Neuer Kunstsalon Hans Goltz* (New Art Salon Hans Goltz) at Odeonsplatz. Early in 1913, the notion of a “blaue Reiterreiterin” was entertained in the correspondence between the German-Jewish artist, poet, and writer Else Lasker-Schüler and Werefkin (fig. 7.1). No longer were women delegated to the “Damensattel” or side saddle since Lasker-Schüler used the term “blaue Reiterreiterin” as a collocation of rider and horsewoman, Werefkin being addressed as both “vieladeliger, wilder Junge” (noble, wild lad) and “süsse Malerin” (sweet woman painter). This conjunction and disjunction of values and gender-crossing is as typical of the poet’s style of addressing her female colleagues as it is of her own fictional self-naming as Prinz Jussuf von Theben or the Prince Joseph of Thebes, as she signs herself in the epistolary exchange. Indeed, her signature is accompanied by a self-portrait, adorned with cosmic symbols and exotic, plumed hat, which we can identify as a *Kriegshut* (war hat). This can be viewed in a concurrent reproduction, based on a drawing

Shulamith Behr, “Marianne Werefkin,” in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, ed. Delia Gaze, vol. 2 (London, Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborne, 1997), 1441–1445.

2 Adrian Kochman, “Russian émigré artists and political opposition in fin-de-siècle Munich,” *Emporia State Research Studies*, 45:1 (2009), 6–26.

3 See Shulamith Behr, “Kandinsky, Münter and Creative Partnership,” in *Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction 1900–1921*, ed. Hartwig Fischer and Sean Rainbird (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 77–100; 213–214.

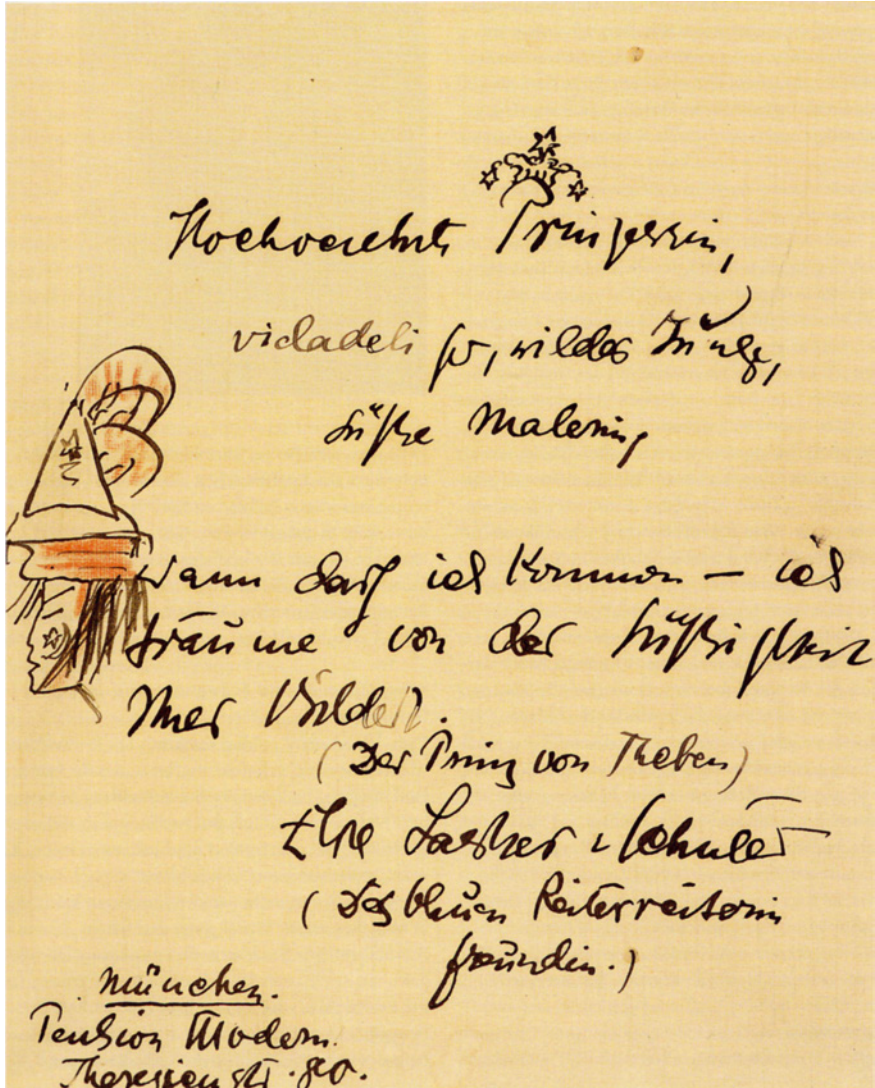


FIGURE 7.1 Letter by Else Lasker-Schüler to Marianne Werefkin (*blaue Reiterreiterin*), 1913, pen, ink and crayon on paper, 16.5 × 13.5 cm

PRIVATE COLLECTION

in Franz Marc's possession at the time and published in the literary magazine *Saturn* 3:4, April, 1913.⁴

4 *Selbstbildnis des Prinzen von Theben im Kriegshut* (Self-Portrait of the Prinz von Theben with War Hat), "Werkverzeichnis" (Œuvre Catalogue), in *Elsa Lasker-Schüler: Die Bilder*

At this juncture, then, it is pertinent to question the model of male-bonding containment in the *Blaue Reiter* and, via a discussion of Werefkin and Lasker-Schüler, examine whether the *Blaue Reiter* harbored the staging of more complex notions of gendered authorship and agency. It is clear that aspects of the performative are relevant to psychoanalytical theory in general and feminist art historical enquiry in particular. In the British psychoanalyst Joan Riviere's essay of 1929, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," she argues that women display the mask of "masculinity" (knowledge and skill) as a game, acknowledging that this is something they do not genuinely possess.⁵ Equally, however, she considers "womanliness" in female identity as a mask and protective mechanism in concealing what they lack in patriarchal society. For the purposes of this essay, it is appropriate to take on board Judith Butler's poststructuralist response to Riviere, which claims there is no essential femininity or masculinity but that gender is constructed and performative.⁶ In an interview, published in 1992, Butler explores how fantasy can function as a means of escape from, and resistance to, sex-based gender constraints. This is not to say that fantasy is free of social relations and power, but she argues that its process "orchestrates and shatters relations of power."⁷ As in Butler's emphasis on fantasy, Susan Suleiman, in the field of Comparative Literature, stresses the role of creative play which, she states, is "the activity through which the human subject most freely and inventively constitutes herself or himself."⁸ Albeit through the lens of Suleiman's study of Surrealist literary theory and gender, we will see how crucial the elements of "play" are to both Werefkin and Lasker-Schüler's creativity.

Through consideration of the laws of association, networking, and the crossing of borders between literary and artistic communities, this essay explores the coordinates of their interaction. Lasker-Schüler's initial introduction to the older woman was gained through their mutual friendship with Franz Marc and Maria Franck, whom the poet visited in Sindelsdorf in January 1913. Lasker-Schüler successfully enlisted Werefkin's assistance in attempts to extricate Johannes Holzmann (alias Senna Hoy), an anarchist revolutionary

(Else Lasker-Schüler: The Pictures), ed. Ricarda Dick (Frankfurt/Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2010), no. i23, p. 264.

- 5 Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (London and New York: Methuen & Co., 1986), 45–61. Originally published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (IJPA), 10 (1929), 303–313.
- 6 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 68–73.
- 7 Judith Butler, "The Body you Want. Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler," *Artforum* 31 (November, 1992) 3: 87.
- 8 Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 179.

and homosexual, from a seven-year incarceration in Moscow. Albeit that their efforts were to no avail and Hoy committed suicide in 1914, this context gives one further insight into their acquaintance with and openness to discourses on the “Third Sex.”

Further to this, Lasker-Schüler writes compellingly of her reception of Werefkin’s works; in her letter she states “Wann darf ich kommen—ich träume von der Süßigkeit Ihrer Bilder” (When should I come—I dream of the sweetness of your paintings). We are unsure as to which of Werefkin’s works the poet was referring and how to interpret the so-called “sweetness” she observes, since it is a term not commonly associated with the forcefulness of Werefkin’s oeuvre at the time. Hence, the explanatory potential of Lasker-Schüler’s poem “Marianne von Werefkin” can be of assistance. Therein, she raises matters pertaining not only to transnational/cultural exchange between West and East but also to the gendering of the creative process via “child-like play.” The discussion that follows is arranged in three sections: “Performing the Wo/man,” “Painting and Poetry,” and “Creative Play: Word and Image.”

Performing the Wo/man

Concepts of the “Third Sex” were widely discussed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Long before he opened his Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919, the pioneer of sexology Magnus Hirschfeld campaigned against Paragraph 175, the law in Germany’s penal code against male homosexuality.⁹ In the bohemian circles that frequented the Café des Westens (Café of the West), Lasker-Schüler came across Hirschfeld long in advance of the publication of her dedicatory essay to him in 1918.¹⁰ It was in the café milieu too that she encountered Johannes Holzmann, who was descended from a bourgeois German-Jewish family and became a teacher of religion in Berlin.¹¹ As was the

9 See Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), 693.

10 Else Lasker-Schüler, “Doktor Magnus Hirschfeld,” *Züricher Post und Handelszeitung* (Zurich Post and Trade Newspaper), 40: 317, 10 July 1918 (morning edition), in Else Lasker-Schüler, *Essays. Mit einer Einbandzeichnung der Verfasserin* (Essays: with a cover drawing by the author) (Berlin: Paul Cassirer, 1920), 29–31.

11 Walter Fähnders, “Anarchism and Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany: Senna Hoy, Erich Mühsam and Jon Henry Mackay,” in *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left*, ed. Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis and James D. Steakly (Binghamton: Haworth, 1995), 117–154.

case with most of her male contacts, she playfully renamed him Senna Hoy by reversing the name Johannes. In his early journalistic work, Senna Hoy self-published a booklet in 1903, entitled *Das dritte Geschlecht* (The Third Sex), in which he decried the ignorance of people and all classes of natural biological explanations of homosexuality.¹² But his most popular publishing platform was the journal *Kampf: Zeitschrift für gesunden Menschenverstand* (Struggle: Journal for Common Sense), which appeared in twenty-five issues (eleven of which were banned) between 1904 and 1905 under his editorship. It provided a forum for “libertarian strivings,” and included the writings of Lasker-Schüler, Eric Mühsam, and Peter Hille, in addition to Hoy’s own brand of cultural reform in promoting anarchist views of free love, as in his essay “Die Homosexualität als Kulturbewegung” (Homosexuality as a Cultural Movement).¹³ With his long hair, framing hat, black cape, and boots, Hoy cultivated a striking appearance of “Otherness” and dandyism, which no doubt drew accusations of degeneracy. While he fled Berlin and was ultimately imprisoned in tsarist Moscow for revolutionary activities, Lasker-Schüler constantly agitated for his release.¹⁴

Fascinatingly, in the Wilhelmine period, whether lesbian or not, many professional women poets and artists foray into a field traditionally monopolized by men led to them being given the pejorative label *Mannweib* or “manwoman” to denote their being neither man nor woman, but members of a third sex; they were thought to have gone against nature, shirking their responsibility as wives and mothers.¹⁵ Though her second marriage to Herwarth Walden disintegrated in 1911, Lasker-Schüler, albeit impoverished, was by that time in the forefront of literary productivity and was invited to give poetry readings in Berlin and other major European cities, performances which were highly charged with the intensity of both her personality and her material. One can judge from posed photographs that Lasker-Schüler carved an unusual niche in the severity of her reform dress, relieved only by feminine cuffs and chains. In her performance dress (fig. 7.2), however, she chose baggy Eastern trouser suits, gaudy cheap jewelry, and sported, by 1912, a page-boy hairstyle, modelling her adopted persona on a Pharaonic funerary relief source.¹⁶ Interpretations abound of

12 Senna Hoy, *Das dritte Geschlecht. Ein Beitrag zur Volksaufklärung* (The third sex: a contribution to public enlightenment) (Berlin: self-published, 1903).

13 *Kampf* 1 (1904) 5: 151–158.

14 See Betty Falkenberg, *Else Lasker-Schüler: A Life* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2003), 99–103.

15 Adrian Kochman, “Ambiguity of Home: Identity and Reminiscence in Marianne Werefkin’s *Return Home*, c. 1909,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 5 (Spring 2006) 1.

16 The origins and development of the Joseph theme are discussed in Ricarda Dick, “Else Lasker-Schüler als Künstlerin” (Else Lasker-Schüler as an artist), in Dick, *Else Lasker-Schüler: Die Bilder*, 123–129.



FIGURE 7.2 Else Lasker-Schüler as *Fakir* from *Thebes*, frontispiece from her novel *Mein Herz*, 1912

Lasker-Schüler's appropriation of the Joseph myth elicited in part from her own reminiscences.¹⁷ However, on a more critical level, her identification with the outsider prince testifies to her marginality, as a German-Jew and woman poet seeking prophetic status in male-dominated literary circles. Hence, the figure of the "wo/man", as seized on in Gisela Brinker-Gabler's interpretation of Lasker-Schüler's Expressionist poetry, is viewed as a subversive agent through which Lasker-Schüler could experiment with poetic license.¹⁸

Werefkin too had to cross traditional gender boundaries to become a professional artist, in other words, to become less of a woman and to be more like a man. Superficially, she may fit the profile of the *Mannweib* as an unmarried professional woman artist, someone who had rejected the traditional women's role. However, as she stated:

17 Else Lasker-Schüler, *Das Hebräerland* (Hebrew Land) (Zurich: Oprecht, 1937).

18 Gisela Brinker-Gabler, "The Primitive and the Modern: Gottfried Benn and Else Lasker-Schüler. Woman/Women in Expressionism," in *Else Lasker-Schüler. Ansichten und Perspektiven: Views and Reviews*, ed. Ernst Schürer and Sonja Hedgpath (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1999), 56.

I am not cowardly and I keep my word. I am faithful to myself, ferocious to myself, and indulgent to others. That is I, the man. I love the song of love—that is I, the woman. I consciously create for myself illusions and dreams, that is I the artist ... I am much more a man than a woman. The desire to please and to pity alone make me a woman. I hear and I take note ... I am neither man nor woman—I am I.¹⁹

While it is important to acknowledge how frustrating it must have been to define one's creativity in terms of the appropriation of the masculine norm, Werefkin goes beyond this by claiming "I am I", the artist. As in the case of Lasker-Schüler's use of the Joseph or Jussuf figure, the subject position of the wo/man is fluid and able to transcend the static antagonism of the Mann/Weib. The subversive implications of the androgyne enter into Werefkin's portrayals of *Ausdruckstanz* (expressive dance) and, in particular, her representations of the Russian Jewish dancer Alexander Sacharoff. As a member of the NKVM circle of artists, performers, musicians, and critics, Sacharoff entranced initiated audiences with his choreographic inventions. Largely the preserve of women dancers like Isadora Duncan, expressive dance relied on a rejection of conventional ballet and on direct communication by means of streamlined bodily movement and gesture. It was in the masquerade of the performance that sexual identity could be interpreted as fluid, and Werefkin labored this ambiguity. In her various works depicting Sacharoff, the experience of dance possibly matched Werefkin's fantasies, the freedom of movement liberating the body from society's regulatory constraints of gender identity and sexuality.²⁰

Painting and Poetry

Interestingly, at about the same time as Lasker-Schüler dedicated her poem to Werefkin, critical reception of the artist's works was in fact highly favorable. In

19 "Je ne suis pas lâche et je tiens la parole donnée. Je suis fidèle à moi-même, féroce à moi-même et indulgente aux autres. Voilà moi homme. J'aime le chant de l'amour—voilà moi femme. <Je me crée consciemment des illusions et des rêves—voilà moi artiste.> [...] <Je suis un homme bien plus qu'une femme.> Le besoin de plaire et le pitié seuls me font femme. <J'écoute et je prends notes [...] Je ne suis ni homme, ni femme: je suis moi." Marianne Werefkin, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, III, October 30, 1905, 257–259. Fondazione Marianne Werefkin (Archive), Museo Comunale d'Arte di Ascona.

20 See Shulamith Behr, "Veiling Venus: gender and painterly abstraction in early German modernism," in *Manifestations of Venus. Art and Sexuality*, ed. Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 126–141.

Die Kunst für Alle (Art for Everyone), the well-known reviewer Maximilian Karl Rohe, who had called the first *Blaue Reiter* exhibition absurd and the exhibitors insane, focused exclusively on her works as the most original within a group exhibition that had moved from the gallery of Hans Goltz on Odeonsplatz to the Neuer Kunstsalon of the dealers P.F. Schmidt and Max Dietzel. Certainly, Rohe favored the poetic, the cloaking of everyday life in unexpected forms and coloration.²¹ What he terms naïveté, we can understand as Werefkin's deliberate use of distortion, stylization, and simplification, consistent with her interest in the works of Munch and, after her visit to Kovno (now Kaunas) in Lithuania in 1909/10, her re-familiarization with local ethnicities important to modern Lithuanian painting.²² No wonder Rohe felt inspired by the novelty of her works that he could even recall in memory.

While it is difficult to know which other works were on display, Werefkin's most recently completed paintings arose out of their summer visit to Oberstdorf, the highest market town in the South Bavarian Alps. Well-known for its mountainous landscape, valleys, forests, and meadows, which were popular with hikers, the Allgäu district was equally famous for its cotton and weaving factories. In Werefkin's painting *Werkstadt/Der Heimweg* (Factory Town/ The Way Home, 1912, fig. 7.3), while interpreting the topography of the landscape in strident contrasts of complementary colors and their nuanced facture—broad versus playful broken brushstroke—she reveals the more sinister implications of the encroachment of modernity in the setting; the church tower competes with belching chimneys, both nature and industrial town dwarfing the burdened silhouettes of workers on their way home in the sunset-lit darkness of the townscape.

Let us now read three out of the eight stanzas of Lasker-Schüler's poem "Marianne von Werefkin" dedicated to Werefkin and speculate that the poet was familiar with the artist's works comparable to the painting *Werkstadt/Der Heimweg*:

Marianne plays with the colors of Russia's painting:
 Green, light green, pink, white,
 And not forgetting cobalt blue,
 These are her faithful playfellows.

21 Maximilian Karl Rohe, "München" (Munich), *Die Kunst für Alle* (Art for everyone), 28: 12 (15 March 1913) 286.

22 Annekathrin Merges-Knoth, "Ich sehe in allem hier mich selbst": Marianne Werefkin und Litauen" ("I see myself in everything here": Marianne Werefkin and Lithuania), in *Marianne Werefkin: Die Farbe beisst mich ans Herz* (Marianne Werefkin: color bites my heart), ed. Barbara Weidle (Bonn: August Macke Haus, 1999), 76–88.



FIGURE 7.3 Marianne Werefkin, *Factory Town/The Way Home*, 1912, tempera on board, 69.5 × 83 cm

FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE ASCONA

Marianne von Werefkin—
 I called her the noble street lad,
 Rascal of Russian town, a hand
 In every prank for miles around.

....

Marianne's soul and her unbounded heart
 Like to play at joy and pain,
 Just as she takes to painting melancholy
 In colors that twitter like birds.²³

23 Karl Jürgen Skrodzki ed., *Else Lasker-Schüler, Sämtliche Gedichte* (Else Lasker-Schüler: collected poems) (Frankfurt Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 344–346, trans. Nicola Shearman:

“Marianne spielt mit den Farben Rußlands Malen:/Grün, Hellgrün, Rosa, Weiß,/Und namentlich der Kobaltblau/Sind ihre treuen Spielgefährtin.

Marianne von Werefkin—/Ich nannte sie den adeligen Straßenjungen/Schelm der Russenstadt, im weiten Umkreis/Jeden Streich gepachtet...

From her own identity as “outsider,” Lasker-Schüler has no difficulty in perceiving Werefkin’s Russianness, yet it is also gendered: male in its transgressive sowing of havoc in the town (*Schelm der Russenstadt*), feminized in its play predominantly of and with color values, the “Süßigkeit” (sweetness) of its painterly qualities. As in the case of her reception of Franz Marc’s postcards, the *Zeichnerin* or draughtswoman Lasker-Schüler responded to the *farbensüss* of the painters.²⁴ But, for her, the meanings of *süss* are not frivolous but laden and fraught. As Lasker-Schüler implies, these mysterious paintings elicit the sensations of the Freudian *unheimlich*, the familiar made strange, the toying with both joyous and painful memories in both sight and sound (colors that twitter like birds).²⁵

Creative Play: Word and Image

For Lasker-Schüler, the element of play operated on various levels and was a serious part of her literary and artistic strategies. Through myth making—her childhood reminiscences and claim that she was born in Thebes and not Wuppertal—exposed the possibilities of expansion beyond her expected role as a woman in bourgeois German-Jewish society. This rich dialectic between the autobiographic or local and the Oriental signifies what Donna Heizer has termed Lasker-Schüler’s “Oriental performance space” in which she experiments with the forms of language, heightened use of metaphors, and elevated levels of pathos.²⁶ Here we find much in common with the Expressionist paradigm of primitivism and modernity. For, as with many other intellectuals in her circle, Lasker-Schüler located authenticity in an amalgam of Ancient Egypt, Old Testament, and Middle-Eastern exoticism.

Mariannens Seele und ihr unbändig Herz/Spielen gern zusammen Freud und Leid,/Wie sie so oft die Melancholie/Hinmalt mit zwitschernden Farbentönen.”

- 24 See Kimberly A. Smith, “Ambivalent Utopia: Franz Marc and Else Lasker-Schüler’s Primitivist Postcards,” in *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, ed. David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), 71–84.
- 25 The Freudian *unheimlich* is raised in Adrian Kochman, “Ambiguity of Home: Identity and Reminiscence in Marianne Werefkin’s *Return Home*,” c. 1909,” 7–8.
- 26 John Pizer, “The Third Dialectic in Else Lasker-Schüler’s ‘Die Wupper,’” *Monatshefte* (Monthly Booklets) 98 (Fall, 2006) 3: 370–383, citing Donna K. Heizer, *Jewish-German Identity in the Orientalist Literature of Elsa Lasker-Schüler, Friedrich Wolf and Franz Werfel* (Columbia: Camden House, 1996), 30–31.

In her *Schrift-Zeichen*—her calligraphic manner of writing and developing word images, while she elicits the spontaneity of child-like innocence we are aware that these are based on studied affirmation of recent archaeological finds, possibly those deriving from Tell el Amarna of carved plaster busts.²⁷ In the profile of her Jussuf head (fig. 7.1), she echoes the slightly damaged nose and elongated contours of the Amenophis IV head, accompanying this with cosmic signs of sickle moon and stars.²⁸ Lasker-Schüler's *Doppelbegabung* (double talent) does not exclude the use of color but she integrates it differently, creatively, and unexpectedly, in relation to text and caption.²⁹ In *Die jüdischen Häuptlinge* (*Die wilden Juden*) (*Jewish Chiefs. The Wild Jews*, 1913, fig. 7.4), drawn on velum in inks and crayon, she evokes the stacked compositions and figural repetition of Egyptian relief sculpture. In her inventive-ness of line, graphic precision of the profiles in serial formation, she explores the interplay between negative and positive space, which is endorsed by the scribble-like and delicacy of colored linear formation therein.

From Werefkin's essentialist viewpoint, however, painting is distinct from written language. In 1914, in her "Talk on the Symbol, the Sign and its Significance in Mystical Art," a treatise that accompanied an exhibition of her works in the School of Art in Vilnius, she asserted the values of ethnographic and even popular artisanal art like Biedermeier.³⁰ According to this model she criticized her training, from the realism of her tutor Ilya Repin, to the elegance of her foreign tutors, as harmful for the search of the pure ideals of art:

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- 27 For consideration of Lasker-Schüler as a draughtswoman, see Ricarda Dick, "Elsa Lasker-Schüler's Entwicklung zur Zeichnerin" (Elsa Lasker-Schüler's development as a graphic artist), in *Der Sturm: Zentrum der Avante Garde* (*Der Sturm: center of the avant-garde*), ed. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Gerhard Finckh, vol. 2 (Wuppertal: Von der Heydt Museum, 2012), 86–100.
- 28 Ricarda Dick, "Elsa Lasker-Schüler als Künstlerin" (Elsa Lasker-Schüler as artist), in Dick, *Elsa Lasker-Schüler: Die Bilder*, 130–132.
- 29 For consideration of Lasker-Schüler in an art historical context, see Astrid Schmetterling, "Das ist direkt ein Diebstahl an den Kunsthistorikern.' Elsa Lasker-Schüler's bildnerisches Werk im kunsthistorischen Kontext" ("This is concretely a theft from the art historians: Elsa Lasker-Schüler's artistic work in the context of art history"), in *Elsa Lasker-Schüler: Die Bilder*, 161–193.
- 30 Marianne Werefkin, *Vilenskij vestnik* (Vilnius Messenger) (1914) No. 3234, trans. "Causerie sur le symbole, le signe et sa signification dans l'art mystique," Gabrielle Dufour-Kowalska, ed., *Marianne Werefkin: Lettres a un Inconnu: Aux sources de l'expressionisme* (Letters to a Stranger. Expressionist Sources) (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 179.

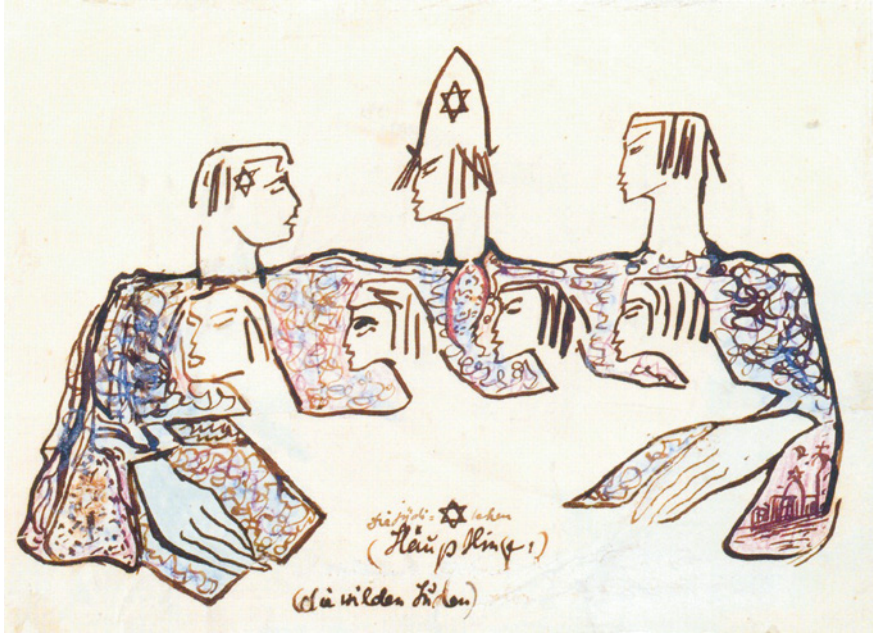


FIGURE 7.4 Else Lasker-Schüler; *The Jewish (Chiefs:) (The Wild Jews)*, 1913, February–May 1913, ink and chalk on paper, 14 × 19 cm

ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER-STIFTUNG IM KUNSTMUSEUM, SOLINGEN

From this realization the true painter was awoken in me: I ceased to think in symbols of words (they cannot be symbols in our art), but I thought exclusively in symbols of lines and of colors. All my sentiments, all my impressions are translated into this language of lines and of colors, as simply as this is done by everyone in language ... For example: I need for my colored symbolism a series of blue smudges; I look in nature for that which could be this series of blue smudges without destroying by my figurative form the symbol which is at the foundation of my smudge. In one case this could be some buckets ... That is my method of creating.³¹

31 Ibid. 180–181. English trans. Isabel Boldry: “Dès cette prise des conscience s’éveilla en moi le véritable peintre: je cessai de penser en symboles de mots (ils ne peuvent être des symboles dans notre art), mais je pensai exclusivement en symboles de lignes et de couleurs. Tous mes sentiments, toutes mes impressions sont traduits dans cette langue de lignes et de couleurs, aussi simplement que cela est fait par tout le monde dans le langage [...] Par exemple: j’ai besoin pour mon symbolisme coloré d’une suite de taches bleues; je cherche dans la nature ce qui peut être cette suite de taches bleues sans détruire par ma forme

Here Werefkin provides her own credo for her form of figurative painting as growing out of abstraction, out of primary symbols of line and color, yet she goes on to differentiate her practice from Kandinsky in painting and Schönberg in music. That the *Blaue Reiter* could accommodate for such stylistic variation, as well as forms of metonymic and performative interplay, signals the potential that it held for women artists and their networks. In our consideration of Else Lasker-Schüler's reception of Werefkin, we find her attracted to the artist's coloration and the synesthetic interplay between sound and color. Whereas Werefkin sustains a form of philosophical idealism, Lasker Schüler's own mechanisms are far less purist in exploring the relations between words, sound, and image. Notwithstanding their differences, the ways in which wo/man has been outlined above has affected the displacement from, what Susan Suleiman calls the "patriarchal mother," to the "playful mother." This takes place when the mother allows such possibilities of play. As Suleiman writes: "To imagine the mother playing is to recognize her most fully as a subject—as autonomous and free, yet (or for that reason?) able to take the risk of 'infinite expansion' that goes with creativity."³²

figurative le symbole qui est à la base de ma tache. Dans un cas ce peuvent être des seaux
[...] Telle est ma façon de créer."

32 Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, 179.

“Between us sleeps our child—art”: Creativity, Identity, and the Maternal in the Works of Marianne von Werefkin and Her Contemporaries

Dorothy Price

Abstract

This essay explores the interstices between creativity, procreativity, motherhood, and identity in the works of Marianne Werefkin and some of her contemporaries within German modernism. For the artists Käthe Kollwitz and Paula Modersohn-Becker, artistic creation and motherhood were twin concerns in their self-constructed identities as artists. For Werefkin and Gabriele Münter, the poles of creativity and procreativity were more complexly figured. Whilst mothers and children feature as predominant subject matter in the works of Kollwitz and Modersohn-Becker, and to some extent in the works of Münter, the subject is virtually absent in the works of Werefkin, for whom “art” is the child who sublimates her erotic desire.

One day I happened to assist a doctor at a gynecological examination. When the speculum was in place, the doctor showed me the bottom of the diseased womb. She was a woman in childbed, she had just bled in order to give life; after giving birth she had unexpected complications. The horror... a nauseating odor rose to my nose; the linens stained with blood and pus moved my heart... I cared for the sick woman, approaching her each time with a retch. On the third day this woman cried out to me in sorrow that her husband ‘took’ her that very night. Since then physical love has been a monster to me... For four years we have slept side by side. I have remained virgin, he has become virgin again. Between us sleeps our child—art...¹

1 “Il m’est arrivé un jour d’assister un médecin dans une auscultation gynécologique. Le miroir placé, le médecin m’a montré le fond de la matrice malade. C’était une accouchée, elle venait de saigner pour donner la vie; après l’avoir donnée, elle pourrissait des complications survenues. L’horreur...une nauséabonde odeur me montait au nez, les linges maculés de sang et pus me tournaient le cœur...Je soignais la malade, chaque fois l’approchant avec un haut le cœur. Au troisième jour, cette femme me criait en hurlant de douleur que son mari l’avait possédée cette nuit même. L’amour physique m’est depuis un monstre.... Il y a quatre

The third letter of the first volume of Marianne Werefkin's diaries opens with this visceral account of the aftermath of childbirth and the horrors of postpartum copulation that prompted her early decision to replace physical sexual contact with the nurturing of "the illusory and the artistic," "the beautiful" and "the chaste love" of art.² Although the interstices between creativity, procreativity, gendered and sexual identity are frequently rehearsed tropes within feminist analyses of women's artwork, very little comparative research in English has been undertaken of the variety of discursive frameworks around women, identity, and creativity in the work of women artists associated with German modernism. Whilst for both Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) and Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907), artistic creation and motherhood were twin concerns in their self-constructed identities as artists, for Marianne Werefkin (1860–1938) and Gabriele Münter (1877–1962) both of whom remained childless, the poles of creativity and procreation were more complexly figured.

Public political discourse in late nineteenth-century Europe had structured the ideal image of the maternal as the stabilizing force of social order. Ideal mothers were the bedrock of conservative tradition in an age of political uncertainty and change. However, as the century came to a close, widespread cultural interest in aspects of childhood and youth, as twin pillars of innocence and renewal on the one hand, and dangerous but alluring liminal sexuality on the other, began to characterize a shift in consciousness. As childhood historian, Philippe Ariès has observed, if "youth is the privileged age of the seventeenth century, childhood of the nineteenth", then it is "adolescence" in the twentieth.³ As such, the transition from fin-de-siècle to early twentieth century offers a significant historical context for a comparative consideration of Modersohn-Becker's, Kollwitz's, Münter's, and Werefkin's potentially disruptive practices within normative understandings of the pre-First World War German avant-garde.⁴ All four artists began their careers across

ans que nous dormons côte à côte. Je suis restée vierge, lui l'est redevenu. Entre nous dort notre enfant—l'art..." Marianne Werefkin, *Lettres à un Inconnu: Aux sources l'expressionnisme* (Letters to an Unknown. Expressionist Sources), ed. by Gabrielle Durour-Kowalska, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1999), 72–75.

2 Ibid., 75.

3 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962).

4 See for example David Ehrenpreis, "The Figure of the Backfisch: Representing Puberty in Wilhelmine Germany," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (Journal of Art History), 67 (2004) 4: 479–508; Diane Radycki "Pictures of the Flesh': Modersohn-Becker and the Nude," *Women's Art Journal* (Fall/Winter 2009): 3–14; John Neubauer, *The Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Adolescence*

the nineteenth *and* twentieth centuries, across their era's transition of interest from childhood to adolescence. And they did this whilst also forging professional roles for themselves as artists in an age of intense debate and conflict concerning the propriety of women's public professional, maternal, and domestic roles. In Wilhelmine Germany, women entering the professions were thought to pose danger to the stability of the social order, precisely because of the implied threat to their roles as mothers and nurturers of the nation. The pressures on women artists to procreate in the domestic realm rather than to "create" in the public sphere were immense and the subject of all four artists' direct and indirect experiences within the first decade of the new century. Of particular interest in relation to these conflicts were the different approaches that Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz, Münter, and Werefkin, all took to the representation of women and/or children as subject matter during this period, an area I would like to focus on for the rest of this chapter.

Perhaps the most famous examples of the German avant-garde's representations of young girls entering adolescence and puberty can be readily found in many vibrant images of the young models of *Die Brücke* (The Bridge), like Fränzi and Marcella. For *Die Brücke*, numerous renditions of the naked and socially unencumbered Fränzi and Marcella were integral to their Nietzschean ambitions for cultural renewal, symbolized by the hope invested in the new generation of unfettered youth, as well as indexical signs of their own performative bohemian existence.⁵ Yet recent art historical scholarship has begun to re-iterate the radical implications of Modersohn-Becker's engagement with similar Gauguin-inspired themes in her work of a few years earlier.

For Modersohn-Becker, the reiterative depiction of naked and nude women and girls was also central to the construction of her identity as an artist but one which Diane Radycki convincingly claims to have been largely misrecognized in most art historical scholarship until recently.⁶ In Modersohn-Becker's works, the masculinized gaze of Paul Gauguin, the Brücke artists, Pablo Picasso, and other modernists, is supplanted by a radical re-definition of the possibilities for the female nude as an artistic category. Radycki points out

(New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1991); Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

- 5 For more on Kirchner's images of Fränzi and Marcella see Sherwin Simmons "A suggestiveness that can make one crazy": Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Images of Marzella," *Modernism/Modernity* (September 2015) (forthcoming).
- 6 Diane Radycki, *Paula Modersohn-Becker: The First Modern Woman Artist* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2013), 158–182.

that the discursive frameworks in which Modersohn-Becker's art has usually been considered have marginalized her central concern with the depiction of the female nude. Instead, her works have been categorized under the so-called "minor" and "feminine" genres of still-life, self-portraiture, children, and the everyday.⁷ Radycki's revised account helps to rectify the art historical misconstructions regarding Modersohn-Becker's radical contributions to the modernist avant-garde on the terrain of the nude. In her tragically short-lived career, Modersohn-Becker painted over fifty nudes and significantly, more than half of them in the years 1906–07, during her time in Paris.

As is widely known, 1907 was a crucial year in Paris. It saw the production of André Derain's *Baigneuses* (Bathers, Museum of Modern Art, New York), Henri Matisse's *Nu bleu, Souvenir de Biskra* (Blue Nude, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland) and Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (MoMA). As Natasha Staller observes, "the contest for the supremacy of the avant-garde was being fought in the arena of the female nude, painted in large scale, painted aggressively, and painted in a resolutely androgynous and anti-feminine manner."⁸ Yet as many commentators have observed, this notorious battle for the nude was a doggedly masculine one. Yet nowhere in the history of modernism is it quite so clear how a female gaze can completely disrupt dominant masculinist narratives than via Modersohn-Becker's radical intervention into the genre, a whole year earlier, in 1906. Within her first few months of arriving in Worpswede in 1898, Modersohn-Becker commented in her *Tagebuch* (Diary) on the powerful nexus between a local mother and child that she had observed during the course of her sketching:

I sketched a young mother with her child at her breast, sitting in a smoky hut. If only I could someday paint what I felt then! A sweet woman, an image of charity. She was nursing her big, one-year-old bambino when, with defiant eyes, her four-year-old daughter snatched for her breast until she was given it. And the woman gave her life and her youth and her power to the child in utter simplicity, unaware that she was a heroine...⁹

7 Ibid., 158.

8 Natasha Staller, *A Sum of Destructions: Picasso's Cultures and the Creation of Cubism* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001), 318.

9 "Ich zeichnete eine junge Mutter mit dem Kind an der Brust, in einer raucherfüllten Hütte sitzend. Wenn ich nur eines Tages malen könnte, was ich damals empfand! Eine süße Frau, ein Bild der Nächstenliebe. Sie stillte ihr großes, einjähriges Bambino, als mit trotzigem Augen, ihre vierjährige Tochter nach ihrer Brust griff, bis sie sie bekam. Und die Frau gab dem Kind ihr Leben und ihre Jugend und ihre Kraft in vollkommener Einfachheit, ohne zu ahnen, daß sie eine Heldin war." Paula Modersohn-Becker, letter of October 29, 1898, in *The Letters*

The power of the maternal, vicariously experienced by Modersohn-Becker in this Worpswede passage was indeed to find the pictorial form that she hoped for but not until her final trip to Paris in 1906, and certainly not through recourse to any traditional pictorial tradition. Rather, it was via her radical re-working of the female maternal nude. Within two weeks of observing her “young mother with her child at her breast and defiant four-year-old daughter,” Modersohn-Becker had also begun to think about the nude: “Evenings I’m drawing the nude, life-size. Little Meta Fijol, with her pious, little Cecilia face, marks the beginning...”¹⁰

Child nudes, mostly girls after 1903, kneeling or standing, barely contained in their pictorial spaces, and holding or surrounded by flowers and fruits in an allusive nod to (though palpable departure from), their exotic beginnings in Gauguin, constitute much of Modersohn-Becker’s oeuvre for the next three years. But in 1906, she began in earnest on a series of about a dozen paintings of mother-and-child nudes, of which *Liegende Mutter mit Kind II* (Reclining Mother and Child II, fig. 8.1) is the largest, most ambitious, and most radical.

As Radycki has commented, “the frank exhibition of the body, from breast, to belly to pubic hair, sets this work apart from *all* previous maternities and points not back but forward... Modersohn-Becker is not the end of any exhausted tradition of maternity.”¹¹ Rather, she is “a pioneer of the female body interrupting the body of maternity, interrupting the body of fecundity, interrupting the body of spectacle. And challenging categories, roles and limitations.”¹² *Mother-Nude*, as opposed to *Female Nude* or sacred *Madonna and Child*, is until this point a form of representation without a visual history. Western culture knows it only as the site of masculine trauma, whether in the form of “Freud’s castrated mother or Lacan’s phallic one.”¹³ Modersohn-Becker’s gaze does not flinch. If Matisse’s *Nu bleu, Souvenir de Biskra* (Blue Nude) figures female sexuality as the object of the masculine gaze, Modersohn-Becker’s *Liegende Mutter mit Kind II* figures female procreation as a challenge to the dominance of that gaze. It is a work that re-defines pictorial conventions governing the representation of the female body and it radically shifts the viewing norms for its time.

and Journals, ed. Günter Busch and Liselotte von Reinken (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 1998), 112.

10 “Abends zeichne ich den Akt, lebensgroß. Kleine Meta Fijol, mit ihrem frommen, kleinen Cecilia Gesicht, bezeichnet den Anfang.” Paula Modersohn-Becker, letter of November 11, 1898, in *ibid.*, 112.

11 Radycki, *Paula Modersohn-Becker*, 170.

12 *Ibid.*, 172–175.

13 *Ibid.*, 173.



FIGURE 8.1 Paula Modersohn-Becker, *Liegende Mutter mit Kind II (Reclining Mother and Child II)*, 1906, oil on canvas, 82.5 × 124.7 cm
MUSEEN BÖTTCHERSTRASSE, PAULA MODERSOHN-BECKER MUSEUM, BREMEN

Similar pre-occupations with the place of the female nude within the oeuvre of an emerging female artist can be witnessed in Käthe Kollwitz's early works, including a sketch sheet from 1900, one of a series of preparatory studies for an etching entitled *Das Leben* (Life, fig. 8.2). As Rosemary Betterton has observed of this work, there is an interesting dialectic set up between the overtly sexualized gaze conventionally constructed for looking at the female nude and its simultaneous “refusal” by Kollwitz's placing of her own head in front of the torso where the reclining head of the nude might be expected to be.¹⁴ Kollwitz disrupts the conventional visual field of masculine desire, of being looked at as object of the gaze, and instead inserts herself as active subject via her self-portrait head. Kollwitz's “inability to resolve the separation between the self-portrait head and the nude body” reveals the strength of the dichotomy faced by all of the women artists under consideration here, between the artist, who has the right to look, and the female body as the normative object of the gaze.¹⁵

14 Rosemary Betterton, “Maternal Nudes by Kollwitz and Modersohn-Becker,” in *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (London, New York: Routledge 1996), 26.

15 *Ibid.*, 28.



FIGURE 8.2 Käthe Kollwitz, *Self-Portrait and Nude Studies for Das Leben*, 1900, graphite, pen, and black ink, 28 × 44.5 cm
GRAPHISCHE SAMMLUNG, STAATSGALERIE STUTTGART

Whilst Modersohn-Becker's radical approach to the pictorial traditions of "Mother and Child" recasts the genre in order to prize open the category of the female nude, Kollwitz disrupts conventional renditions of serene motherhood by depicting the maternal state as one of physical absorption and psychic possession. Both *Frau mit totem Kind* (Woman with Dead Child, 1903) and *Tod und Frau* (Death and the Woman, 1910) stand outside the western cultural tradition of spiritual and dematerialized motherhood symbolized at its height by the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin birth. *Frau mit totem Kind* visualizes the unspeakable pain of maternal loss whereas *Tod und Frau* hovers in that uniquely liminal space, peculiar to Kollwitz, between symbolism and social commentary. Both Kollwitz and Modersohn-Becker combine the figure of the mother with the representation of the nude—two poles of femininity that are usually kept apart, the publically available erotic body and the privately reproductive one. As Betterton has argued, Kollwitz and Modersohn-Becker's focus on dualities in their artworks between self-portraits and nudes, nudes and mothers, visual representation and maternal origin, was bound up with conflicts around the role of the artist and that of the mother during the period in which they were both working and which they both articulate in their diaries, letters, and journals.¹⁶ However there are interesting and significant

16 Ibid., 20–45.

distinctions also evident from their own writings. Although Modersohn-Becker's most intensely creative period in Paris came through her choice of separation from her husband and her erstwhile resistance to bearing his child, it was also born of a strong emotional bond with her own mother: "And you my dear Mother, stay close to me and give me your blessing to what I am doing. I am your Child."¹⁷

On the other hand, Kollwitz's *Tagebücher* (Diaries) from the pre-war era are significant in their paradoxical re-iteration of the creative energies afforded to her by her children. Taking 1910 as a sample year, she reflects on dreams of having another baby, of a sculpture she imagines entitled *Schwangerschaft* (Pregnancy) and of the ways in which her relationships with her sons are becoming "slacker" as they grow older:

I am gradually approaching the period in my life when work comes first. When both the boys went away for Easter, I hardly did anything but work. Worked, slept, ate and went for short walks. But above all I worked. And yet I wonder whether the 'blessing' is not missing from such work...formerly, in my so wretchedly limited working time, I was more productive because I was more sensual...Potency, potency is diminishing...¹⁸

Whatever their differences and distinctions, what remains significant for both artists is that artistic creativity is categorically bound up with aspects of maternal identity.

What then of the creative identities Münter and Werefkin, both of whom remained childless? Between 1908 and 1910 the representation of children, especially although not exclusively, young girls, became a thematic focus for the 31-year old Münter in a series of works which were subsequently exhibited at Herwarth Walden's Sturm Galerie in 1913. *Kind in Weiß* (Child in White, 1910, Munich, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus fig. 8.3) was originally exhibited

17 "Und du, meine liebe Mutter, bleib' mir nahe und gib' mir deinen Segen für das, was ich tue., Ich bin dein Kind." Paula Modersohn-Becker, letter to her mother, Paris, May 10, 1906, in Modersohn-Becker, *The Letters and Journals*, 398.

18 "Ich rücke allmählich in die Periode meines Lebens herein, wo Arbeit an erster Stelle steht. Als beide Jungen Ostern verreist waren habe ich fast nur gearbeitet. Dann noch geschlafen, gegessen, ein wenig spazieren gegangen. Aber vor allem gearbeitet. Und doch weiß ich nicht ob einer solchen Arbeit nicht der ‚Segen‘ fehlt...und doch war ich früher in meiner so arg beschnittenen Arbeitszeit produktiver weil ich sinnlicher war... Die Potenz, die Potenz läßt nach" Käthe Kollwitz, diary entry, April 1910, in *Käthe Kollwitz: Die Tagebücher 1908–1943* (Käthe Kollwitz. Diaries 1908–1943), ed. Jutta Bohnke Kollwitz (Munich: btb-Verlag, 2007), 65–66. English translation in Hans Kollwitz, ed., *The Diaries and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1955), 53.



FIGURE 8.3

Gabriele Münter, Child in White, 1910, Oil on Cardboard, 44.7 × 39.7 cm

STÄDTISCHE GALERIE IM LENBACHHAUS,
MUNICH

under the title *Mädchenkopf. Weiße Bluse* (Head of a Girl. White Blouse, 1910). According to Reinhold Heller, the “white blouse” of the title was assigned by Münter to distinguish it from four otherwise identically entitled works which Heller ascribes as functioning primarily as typological studies of form, rather than as individual portrait likenesses.¹⁹ Indeed comparative works from this period such as *Knabenporträt* (Portrait of a Young Boy, 1908, Gabriele Münter und Johannes Eichner Stiftung, Munich) and *Mädchen mit Puppe* (Young Girl with Doll, 1908–09, Milwaukee Art Museum), firmly testify to Münter’s bold formal and experimental use of paint, Fauve-inspired color palettes, loose brushwork, and bounded forms.

Following Heller, it could be suggested that although the children depicted in Münter’s work of this period serve as traditional subject matter learned and practiced from her training at the *Damen-Akademie* (Ladies’ Academy), they also become vessels for her vanguard explorations of flattened planes of surface color. As for Modersohn-Becker and *Die Brücke* especially, the representation of pre-pubescent children seems to be inextricably bound up with the labors of modernism. As Shulamith Behr has observed, “the theme of childhood was of consistent relevance to Münter” since “the notion of youth responded to

19 Reinhold Heller, *Gabriele Münter: The Years of Expressionism 1903–1920* (Munich, New York: Prestel, 1997), 118–119.

various intellectual and aesthetic imperatives at the turn of the century."²⁰ For artists in particular, Nietzsche offered a compelling metaphor of futurity in the child as a regenerative principle, the creative person being aligned with both the newborn child and the act of procreation.²¹ The figure of the child in early twentieth century German modernism was regarded as a source of "untainted and authentic culture."²² *Mädchen mit Puppe* (Girl with a Doll) of 1900 was one of Münter's first drawings on the theme and it was one that she was to return to again and again throughout her career.

Although it was typological studies of young girls such as her 1908 *Mädchen mit Puppe* (Young Girl with Doll) that typified Münter's artistic production between 1908 and 1910, *Knabenporträt* (Portrait of a Young Boy) from 1908 is a rarer example of a more psychologically intense study of a child from this period. The girl sits demurely cradling her toy doll, whereas the boy demonstrates apprehension and anxiety, clutching his jacket and poised as if about to run from the scene. Barnaby Wright has suggested that Münter may have found it harder to "establish a coherent symbolic typology of boyhood" which is perhaps why this work remained un-exhibited.²³ Interestingly, Modersohn-Becker also found it more difficult to engage in representations of boys and stopped painting them altogether after 1903. Furthermore, on the rare occasions that Werefkin included children in her work, they were also predominantly, though not exclusively, girls rather than boys. And even Kollwitz, regularly favored either androgynous child-types or gender-specific girls over the representation of boys.

It is clear then that mothers, children, and concepts of the maternal feature as predominant subject matter and/or drivers in the work of Kollwitz and Modersohn-Becker and, to a much smaller degree, in the works of Münter—albeit in very different ways. However, the subject is virtually absent in the works of Werefkin. Yet in Werefkin's series of diaristic *Lettres à un Inconnu* (Letters to an Unknown, 1901–05) concerns about sexual identity, childbirth, and artistic creativity are also expressed at a crucial transitional moment in her life and career. It is thus worth mapping the psychic journey expressed in these diaries

20 Shulamith Behr, "Beyond the Muse: Gabriele Münter as *Expressionistin*," in *Gabriele Münter: The Search for Expression 1906–1917* (London: Courtauld Institute Gallery, 2005), 51.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A book for everyone and nobody) (Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883–85), 107.

22 Behr, "Beyond the Muse," 51.

23 Barnaby Wright, *Portrait of a Young Boy* 1908. Catalogue entry in *Gabriele Münter: The Search for Expression 1906–1917* (London: Courtauld Institute Gallery, 2005), 78.

since they chart the emergence of a strong conviction towards modernism after a lengthy period of artistic inactivity. The woman and artist who emerges from the other side is transformed from a passive “servant of the arts,” who once sublimated all of her desires (sexual, maternal, creative), to a woman of artistic vision and intellect, secure in her own path to modernist abstraction.

Lettres à un Inconnu were begun in 1901, one year after Werefkin’s 40th birthday and the same year that the 20-year old Helene Nesnakomoff (1881–1965) became pregnant by Werefkin’s partner, Alexei Jawlensky (1864–1941). As is widely known, for the preceding six years Werefkin had stalled her own artistic career in order to nurture and support Jawlensky’s. Indeed, her diaries speak to a widely-held Nietzschean reverence for “the artist” as an almost supernatural being and a category from which at the time she believed herself to be excluded because she was a woman.²⁴ She refers to the agonies of her relationship with Jawlensky explaining that she abandoned her art “when I believed that I would be able to serve it better by abstaining so another could succeed.”²⁵ It was to be another four years before she stopped the diaries and returned to painting. It was during this period that she used her diaries to both excise her agonies about Jawlensky’s betrayal but also, crucially, to develop her own artistic ideas.²⁶ In an entry of 1902, she comments bitterly of Jawlensky that “the man to whom I have given all: my spirit, my heart, my inspiration and my affection, my cares, my concerns, my energy, my faith and my confidence, to whom I have opened all the treasures of my genius and of my soul, who enjoyed understanding and help—this man looks upon me with indifference and prefers kitchen maids to me.”²⁷ However, in subsequent, much later entries of 1905,

24 Werefkin, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 96.

25 “J’aime l’art avec une passion si désintéressée, que l’orsque j’ai cru voir que je pouvais le mieux servir en m’abstenant pour qu’un autre arrive, je l’ai fait.” Werefkin, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 79 and 98.

26 Werefkin and Jawlensky had met in the studio of Ilya Repin in 1891 and when, on the death of her father in 1896, Werefkin became beneficiary to an annual pension of 7000 rubles, the couple travelled together to the European capital of art, Munich, along with two of Werefkin’s servants, including the 15-year old Helene. Whilst training under Repin in Russia, Werefkin had begun to make a name for herself as an emerging ‘Russian Rembrandt’ due to her predilection for painting the local Jewish peasant population from the village in a realist manner.

27 “Et l’homme à qui j’ai tout donné: mon esprit et mon Cœur, mon inspiration et mon affection, mes soins et mes soucis, mon soutien, mon énergie, ma foi et ma confiance, [lui] à qui j’ai ouvert tous les trésors de mon genie et de mon âme, qui jouit de la comprehension et de l’aide qu’il trouve en moi, cet home me regarde indifferent et me préfère des filles de cuisine.” Werefkin in 1902, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 100 Also cited in Mara Witzling, ed.,

there is a clear sense that the former gnawing pre-occupations with Jawlensky have been replaced by meditations on abstraction and the search for new directions in her own artistic practice, or as Natalya Tolstaya has suggested, an array of potential new "scripts for paintings."²⁸ Thus, in an entry of 1904 she writes:

One evening, in the raw light of electric lanterns, in the desert of streets depopulated by cafés and theatres, against the grey of walls, the Sisters passed by, all in black with a thin border of white on their capes. In the emptiness which surrounded me, in the emptiness I carried inside me, their somber figures appeared to be enormous. It was a moral act which passed, filling with its grandeur the nothingness which exists around triumphant egoism. My thought followed the Sisters along the tortuous streets which led to their community. It marched next to their silence, it listened to their hearts beat. My thought came back to me so cold....²⁹

As Mara Witzling observes, when Werefkin did start painting again, "her style had been radically transformed."³⁰ Although these troubled early years in Munich lacked painterly activity, they did not lack intellectual stimulus. A regular salon held at the Werefkin-Jawlensky's home at Giselastraße 33 had become the center of the Munich avant-garde and the seedbed for the newly formed *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (New Artists' Association Munich, NKVM). It was also here that Werefkin's renewed vision towards modernist abstraction was nurtured and developed. By the time she painted *Die Landstraße* (Country

"Marianne Werefkin," in *Voicing our Visions: Writings by Women Artists* (New York: The Women's Press, 1991), 137.

28 Natalya Tolstoya, "Marianne Werefkin: The Woman and the Artist," *The Tretyakov Gallery Magazine*, 3 (2010): 100–109. Special Issue *Switzerland-Russia On the Crossroads of Cultures*. Online access via: <http://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com/img/mag/2010/098-109.pdf>.

29 "Un soir, dans la lumière crue des lanternes électriques, dans le désert des rues dépeuplées par les cafés et les théâtres, contres le gris des murs, passaient des sœurs toutes en noir, un mince bord blanc à leurs capes. Dans la ville qui m'entourait, dans la ville que je porte en moi, leurs sombres figures m'apparurent énormes. C'est un acte moral qui passait, remplissant de sa grandeur le néant que fait autour l'égoïsme triomphant. Ma pensée a suivi les sœurs le long des rues tortueuses qui conduisent à leur communauté; elle marchait à côté de leur silence, elle écoutait battre leurs cœurs. Ma pensée m'est revenue aussi froide qu'elle est partie." Werefkin in 1904, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 167. Also cited in Witzling, "Marianne Werefkin," 144.

30 *Ibid.*, 129.

Road, fig. 8.4) in 1907, Werefkin's mature approach to modernist abstraction was combined with her sensitivity towards the uncanny resonance of post-impressionist and symbolist forerunners like Emil Bernard, Maurice Denis, the Nabis, and perhaps especially, Edvard Munch. This resulted in a highly evocative and atmospheric series of works of which *Die Landstraße* is a powerful early example and possibly one of the most enigmatic from this period. Although it is not a direct illustration of the diary entry cited above, there is certainly a sense here of the somber mood evoked by that account. The technical precision of Ilya Repin's pictorial realism, in which Werefkin had been trained, has been replaced by a heightened sensitivity towards surface color, textured brushstrokes, and flattened form. Although there had been an almost ten-year gap in her practice, it is clear from her diaries that her artistic and intellectual vision had not been dormant. Indeed, an earlier quite extensive entry had already signaled the new directions of her thinking. In volume 3 (1904–05), a long entry about color is perhaps one of the clearest indicators of her renewed discovery of herself as an artist in which she reflects on the relationships between color and form and the artists' role in shaping them.³¹



FIGURE 8.4 Marianne Werefkin, *Country Road*, 1907, *tempera on cardboard*, 68 × 106.5 cm
FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA,
ASCONA

31 Werefkin in 1904–1905, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 165–167.

Diary writing was an established and widespread practice amongst women from the Russian nobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a practice that borrowed heavily from French literary styles and genres, such as the epistolary novel; Werekfin's early twentieth-century version continues in this tradition. The diaries themselves are in the form of a journal made up of three notebooks: 1901–02, 1903–04, and 1904–05. Each entry in each notebook is addressed as a letter to a fictional "other," an alter ego through which Werekfin explores her inner ideas and emotions in an exhortation to multiple selves. Indeed, throughout them, she refers to several forms of herself, including *moi-homme*, *moi-femme*, and *moi-artiste*, in her efforts to begin the process of self-integration that allowed her "to start painting again, to be an artist, rather than a servant of the arts."³² Gesine Argent and Derek Offord have noted that: "Ego-writing was considered a means of acceptable self-realization for Russian noblewomen" in the era immediately preceding Werekfin's, confined as it was to the private, domestic sphere.³³ Jürgen Habermas has also observed that diaries and other forms of ego-writing in the modern era existed on a continuum between public and private genres.³⁴ Russian noblewomen's diaries of the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century usually had a specific addressee, such as a sister, friend, lover, or husband and were often intended to be read aloud to a circle of family and friends. Indeed, young women were exhorted by their families to keep diaries of their travels and share them with their circle. Habermas comments that "the diary became a letter addressed to the sender, and the first person narrative became a conversation with one's self addressed to another person. These were experiments with the subjectivity discovered in the close relationships of the conjugal family."³⁵ Epistolary diary keeping was also a peculiarly feminine activity among the nobility and the letters were often intended for a specific recipient, to be sent either in instalments or as a complete work once finished.³⁶

Yet notwithstanding its epistolary format, Werekfin's diary is clearly a private document not intended to be shared, and her recipient, a fictional

32 Witzling, "Marianne Werekfin," 129.

33 See Gesine Argent and Derek Offord, "Ego-writing in French: The diary of Anastasia Lakushkina," in *The History of the French Language in Russia*. Online access via: <https://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/ego-writing-french-diary-anastasiia-iakushkina>.

34 Jürgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991).

35 *Ibid.*, 49.

36 Argent and Offord, "Ego-writing in French: The diary of Anastasia Lakushkina," in *The History of the French Language in Russia*. Online access via: <https://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/ego-writing-french-diary-anastasiia-iakushkina>.

other, is “the unknown” or “the unknown one,” a version or multiple-version of her selves: “It is myself outside of myself.”³⁷ The decision to write in French is also an interesting one. Amongst Russian noblewomen of Werefkin’s mother’s generation, French was predominantly reserved as the language for writing in *genres intimes*, such as letters, journals, and memoirs, whereas Russian was the language reserved for everyday verbal communication, as well as the language of masculine diary writing which normally took the form of a chronicle, rather than the more fragmented epistolary form. For the Russian gentry, French was the language of writing about love and expressing romantic sentiment and devotion. Moreover, French literary writings provided models for Russian women wishing to express their love in what was deemed an appropriate way.³⁸ In Werefkin’s case, it seems that the use of French in her diaries serves to create privacy and intimacy and simultaneously allows her to keep within appropriate bounds of feminine expression. Importantly, I think, it is also a language peculiar to the feminine and therefore consciously separate from Jawlensky’s sphere of influence.

When Werefkin decided to paint once more, she initially turned to genre scenes inspired by the subject matter of French Impressionism. *Biergarten* (Beer Garden, 1907, fig. 8.5) clearly takes inspiration from Édouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and their circle whereas *Frühlingssonntag* (Sunday in Spring, 1907) moves further towards the flattened forms and planes of color derived from French post-impressionism and symbolism. Both works include women with children (a young boy in *Biergarten* and girls in *Frühlingssonntag*) as ciphers of everyday life but observed at a distance, slightly outside the scenes being portrayed.

It also seems that the melancholic distance of observation pertains to many of Werefkin’s major works of this era, including *Herbst/Schule* (Autumn/School, 1907, fig. 8.6) in which the return of children to school becomes symbolic of the cyclical change of the seasons, from summer to autumn. However, the symbolic resonance of Werefkin’s children can perhaps be seen most cogently in *Wäscherinnen* (The Washerwomen, 1911), one of Werefkin’s six contributions to the first NKVM exhibition in 1909. Here a blank-faced child is positioned in the wings, an alternative to the melancholic stares of Münter’s “types,” this instead is a child in time, watching, waiting, observing as the cycles of life unfold.

Although they approach the subject of sexual, creative, and maternal identities very differently, it is clear for all four examples, Modersohn-Becker, Kollwitz, Münter, and Werefkin, that the desire to create is intimately bond

37 “C’est mon moi hors de moi.” Werefkin in 1905, *Lettres à un Inconnu*, 171.

38 Argent and Offord, “Ego-writing in French: the diary of Anastasia Lakushkina,” in *The History of the French Language in Russia*. Online access via: <https://frinru.ilt.bris.ac.uk/texts>.



FIGURE 8.5 *Marianne Werefkin, Bier Garden, 1907, tempera on cardboard, 54 × 73 cm*
FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA,
ASCONA



FIGURE 8.6 *Marianne Werefkin, Autumn/School, 1907, tempera on cardboard; 55 × 74 cm*
FONDAZIONE MARIANNE WEREFKIN, MUSEO COMUNALE D'ARTE MODERNA,
ASCONA

up with a sense of self-consciousness about their identities as woman and as such as both sexual and actual or potential maternal beings. For the slightly older Werefkin, the diaries were a way of mediating on a transitional point in her life and career in which her active sexual identity was sublimated for her artistic one. It therefore remains interesting that of all four artists, Werefkin's engagement with children in her work is always at a distance. They are never the subject of portraits but they are often present *symbolically* as signs of the passing of time and the cycle of life.

Transcending Gender: Cross-Dressing as a Performative Practice of Women Artists of the Avant-garde

Marina Dmitrieva

Abstract

Although it is common in many cultures, cross-dressing is often considered an exceptional phenomenon because it involves not only dressing as a person of the other gender but also the adoption of a non-traditional role in society. This essay examines cross-dressing as a performative practice of women artists of the avant-garde. The emerging *Lebensreform* movement and women's liberation led to changes in the role of women in society and to a new awareness of the body. Cross-dressing is a way to overcome gender stereotypes and promote a creative individuality that would otherwise not be acceptable in a woman; this can be seen in the self-representations of Natalia Goncharova, Zinaida Gippius, Elisaveta Kruglikova, Elsa Lasker-Schüler, and Marianne Werefkin.

"Is woman creative?" is the question that Hans Hildebrandt asks in his 1928 book *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (The Woman as Artist), in which he analyzes the art produced by women from "primitive peoples" to the present. Here, he contemplates "oppositions between masculine and feminine genius," the "strengths and weaknesses of feminine work," and "relationships to the creative man."¹ However, his answer to the initial question turns out to be skeptical: Although the author is impressed by the emancipated woman—particularly by her courage in venturing into a masculine domain—he sees her primarily as "helper and comrade" to man.² Even in the substantial chapter on contemporary female artists from Europe and America, Hildebrandt emphasizes "specifically feminine" fields like children's books, toys, and textiles in the works of artists such as Sonia Delaunay, Alexandra Exter, and Sophie Taeuber as well as the

1 "Gegensätze männlicher und weiblicher Genialität [...] Stärke und Schwächen weiblichen Schaffens [...] Beziehungen zum schöpferischen Manne," Hans Hildebrandt, *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (The woman as artist) (Berlin: Rudolf Mosse Verlag, 1928), 5.

2 "Gehilfin und Kameradin," *ibid.*, 157.

ceramics of Friedl Dicker.³ Works by the female Czech artist Toyen (Marie Čermínová), who is erroneously referred to as a Hungarian, are presented as an illustration of the “feminine predilection for the irrational.”⁴

In spite of the biased nature of his initial thesis, the author demonstrates a substantial knowledge of the international art scene and mentions several Russian women artists, including Hanna Orlova and Natalia Goncharova. Marianne Werefkin is also discussed in the book and her painting *Die letzte Stunde* (The Final Hour) is reproduced.⁵ Although Hildebrandt characterizes her images as “full of visionary power,” he sees them as only half as radical as those “created in the neighboring studio of Alexei Jawlensky.”⁶ On the whole, “the artistic relationship between two people bound by a shared life together” seems “surprisingly loose” to him.⁷ In his eyes, this also applies to the companionship between Gabriele Münter and Wassily Kandinsky.

The book, which appeared in the roaring twenties in the Weimar Republic, illustrates how entrenched the attribution of gender roles was—even in the bohemian circles of Berlin. This helps us to understand the social, organizational, and cultural obstacles women had to overcome in order to gain recognition in this male-dominated world. They utilized various strategies to do so, and one of these was the staging of alternative gender roles—*cross-dressing*.

Staging Gender

In a photo from around 1913, Natalia Goncharova poses in men’s clothing and cap; she holds a long set-painter’s brush like a spear and is pointing it at her partner, Mikhail Larionov, who is dressed in a soldier’s uniform. She appears in

3 “frauenspezifische,” *ibid.*, 173–177.

4 “weiblichen Hanges zum Irrationalen,” *ibid.*, 143.

5 *Ibid.*, 125, ill. 199. The work’s present location is unknown. According to Maaïke van Rijn, the painting was shown at the 100th exhibition of the Sturm gallery in 1921. There were also Sturm postcards featuring this painting. See Maaïke Moniek van Rijn, “Bildende Künstlerinnen im Berliner ‚Sturm‘ der 1910er Jahre” (Women artists at the Berlin *Sturm* of the 1910s), PhD thesis, Tübingen University 2013 https://publikationen.uni-tuebingen.de/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10900/47088/pdf/Bildende_Kuenstlerinnen_im_Berliner_Sturm_der_1910er_Jahre.pdf?sequence=1.

6 “voller visionärer Kraft [...] im Nachbaratelier Jawlenskis entstanden waren,” Hildebrandt, *Die Frau als Künstlerin*, 123.

7 „die künstlerische Beziehung zweier in Lebensgemeinschaft Verbundener überraschend lose,” *ibid.*, 123.



FIGURE 9.1
Léon Bakst, Zinaida Gippius, 1906, pencil, chalk, and sanguine on paper, 54 × 44 cm
 STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW

an active and even aggressive role, while Larionov draws back from the attack with a mischievous expression. In their case, as well as that of the Czech artist couple Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, self-staging was programmatic. Thus, Toyen—who was the only woman in the circle of the *Devětsíl* artists' group—repeatedly staged her sexual as well as artistic ambiguity. She often appeared in a masculine costume and played with the open possibilities offered by her gender-neutral pseudonym. She also sought to cancel out defined gender boundaries in her erotic and surreal paintings.

In Léon Bakst's 1906 watercolor portrait (fig. 9.1), the female poet Zinaida Gippius is depicted in an eighteenth-century page's costume, with velvet breeches and a jabot. In her own works, Gippius often makes use of a masculine lyrical subject and a male authorial mask. She, her husband (the poet Dmitry Merezhkovsky), and the art critic Dmitry Filosofov maintained an open relationship. Numerous visitors to her salons of the early 1900s in St. Petersburg and later in Paris described her as the dominant member of their domestic partnership.⁸ At any rate, her male costume in Bakst's picture is in keeping

8 Olga Matich, "Dialectics of Cultural Return: Zinaida Gippius' Personal Myth," in *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, ed. by Boris Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes, Irina Paperno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 52–72; Kirsti Ekonen, *Tvoret's, subyekt, zhenshina. Strategii zhenskogo pisma v russkom simvolizme* (Creator, Subject, Woman. Strategies in Women's Writings in Russian Symbolism) (Moscow: Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, 2011).



FIGURE 9.2 *Elizaveta Kruglikova*, Self-Portrait. Silhouette, 1934, application
STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM,
ST. PETERSBURG



FIGURE 9.3 *Mikhail Nesterov*, Portrait of *Elizaveta Kruglikova*, 1938, oil on canvas, 125 × 80 cm
TRETIAKOV GALLERY,
MOSCOW

with a performance in the sense of the passéist aesthetic of the artists' group *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art)—unlike the male clothing of the Russian female poet Poliksena Solovyova, who lived in a lesbian relationship and was the sister of the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov.

The 1934 self-portrait of the female graphic artist *Elizaveta Kruglikova* (fig. 9.2) also represents a staging: She shows herself in the form of a silhouette image, wearing a male costume with a bow tie and white vest—in the style of a dandy. This bore a readily understood subversive message in the prude, ideologically, and stylistically homogeneous Stalinist culture of the 1930s. The two portraits of the artist painted by *Mikhail Nesterov* (1938, fig. 9.3, and 1939; Russian Museum, St. Petersburg) emphasize both the untimely foreignness of the unfeminine appearance of this “Russian Parisian” (as she was referred to in artistic circles) and her anachronistic style of dress corresponding to a feminist activist from the turn of the century.

In *Bakst's* portrait of *Gippius*, the theatrical costume, the unstable pose, the androgyny, and the somewhat lascivious gaze of the sitter not only evoke

the erotic frivolity of the decadent epoch—they are also the visual expression of an important aspect of Symbolist discourse, the questioning of traditional gender roles. In this regard, women were much more “revolutionary” than their male colleagues because the framework defining their freedom of action was much more restricted. This applied not only to the conditions under which they lived but also to the perception of their creative potential. As Kirsti Ekonen has shown, female artists from the turn of the century experienced a conflict between the two primary poles of Symbolism—that of the “eternal feminine” and that of the “demonstrative masculinity of an ideal creative subject.”⁹

Gippius took this dilemma as the theme of her 1908 essay “Zverebog,”¹⁰ her answer to Otto Weininger’s 1903 book *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character, 1906), in which he proposes the theory of humanity’s genuine androgyny. Gippius criticizes Weininger’s inconsistency in applying his theory, which assigns a passive object role to woman and the role of the active subject to man. He associates the feminine with the dark aspect and the masculine with the light aspect of existence, and he sees the effeminizing of man as well as the “masculine women” of the emerging women’s movement as a danger to civilization. In Gippius’s opinion, women were seen by their male colleagues as half-animal beings (*zverebog*), who are entirely denied any capacity of judgment. She agrees with Weininger’s arguments regarding the binary qualities of every person, but she nonetheless rejects women’s “assimilation” in this way, that is, their adaptation to fit into the dominant male discourse, within which they are said to lose or “pollute” their “femininity” through the imitation of the “masculine intellect.”¹¹

At least since Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), the performative nature of gender differentiation has been recognized in the secondary literature. Thus, among other things, Butler insists that precisely “drag” or “cross-dressing” presents a transgressive and subversive role in terms of gender identification and simultaneously imitates traditional masculine norms because identity is

9 Ekonen, *Tvoretz, subyekt, zhenshina*, 6.

10 Zinaidas Gippius, “Zverebog. O polovom voprose” (Animalistic Goddess. On Gender Question), *Obrazovanie* (Education), 8/III (1908) 1: 19–27. See also Gippius.com/doc/articleszverebog.html.

11 “Мы с инстинктивным недоверием относимся к женщинам, теряющим женственность; но такие женщины, в сущности, нисколько ее не теряют: они ее лишь видоизменяют, хотелось бы сказать—пачкают *подобием* чужого (мужского) ума, покорно принимая отпечатки.” *Ibid.*

marked as feminine or masculine by way of sign and speech act.¹² Gippius had already been utilizing a strategy of this kind almost a century earlier.

Although it is common in many cultures, cross-dressing has usually been considered an exceptional phenomenon because it involves not only dressing as a person of the other gender but also the adoption of a non-traditional role in society. The “*Malweiber*” (a pejorative term for female plein-air painters in Germany around 1900) also demonstratively presented their alternative lifestyle through particular attributes: through photographs with a cigarette in their mouth or with broad-brimmed men’s hats, through a preference for loose-fitting reform dresses, and—above all—through their decision to lead the unconventional and free life of the artist, which had previously been reserved for men.¹³

“The Cosmic Synthesis”

The book by Hildebrandt mentioned at the beginning of this essay repeats many of the prejudices that emancipated women had to deal with. Werefkin’s *Lettres à un Inconnu* (Letters to an Unknown, 1901–05) reveal that, for years, she had doubts about the artistic potential of women as compared to men, and these led her to temporarily abstain from creative work. In addition, she often felt a sense of inner discord and reflected upon her twofold nature, her yearning for an “other half of my self,”¹⁴ for a “cosmic synthesis.”¹⁵

Doubling, double and triple figures are also among the leitmotifs of her images related to Symbolism. Clemens Weiler interprets these “sequences” as her individual path to abstraction; unlike Kandinsky’s, they are not “intellectual” but point more towards the ambiguity of the external appearances behind which a higher truth is always hidden—a fundamental theme in Symbolist

12 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990), 137. See also Katie Barclay and Sarah Richardson, eds., *Performing the Self: Women’s Lives in Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2014).

13 S. Katja Behling and Anke Manigold, *Die Malweiber. Unerschrockene Künstlerinnen um 1900* (The Malweiber. Unabashed Women Painters Around 1900) (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2013). See also Meike Hopp’s essay on women artists in Munich in this volume.

14 “J’ai voulu vivre double, mon moi reflété par mon moi,” in Annekatriin Merges-Knoth, “Marianne Werefkins russische Wurzeln—Neuansätze zur Interpretation ihres künstlerischen Werkes” (Marianne Werefkin’s Russian roots—New approaches to the interpretation of her artistic work), PhD thesis, University of Trier 1996, 205.

15 “une synthèse cosmique,” Marianne Werefkin, *Lettres à un Inconnue* (Letters to a Stranger. Expressionist Sources), ed. by Gabrielle Dufour-Kowalsky (Paris: Klincksieck, 2005), 69.

discourse.¹⁶ This search for those “*choses qui ne sont pas*,” which lie behind the everyday, is similar to the approach of Edvard Munch or Alfred Kubin.¹⁷ The same is true of the mystical, surreal paintings of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, the visionary painter and composer from Vilnius, whose works Werefkin is likely to have seen in her native Lithuania.¹⁸

In her doctoral dissertation, Jelena Hahl-Koch demonstrates how important the discourse of Russian Symbolism was for the artist.¹⁹ The mystical sublime in the circle of the decadent movement in Russia is closely related to Werefkin's intellectual as well as emotional world and to her vocabulary, even if almost no direct references are to be found in her writings. Through her various connections to the Russian art scene, through the vivid exchange of ideas in her prominent Munich salon, and—above all—through her marked interest in art theory, she is likely to have been familiar with these contemporary aesthetic discourses.

The circle of the so-called Young Symbolists—Gippius, Merezhkovsky, Vyacheslav Ivanov—stood under the influence of the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. The grasping of the visible in terms of a shadow of a truth hidden from our eyes, the apocalyptic ambiences, and—above all—the discourse established by Solovyov on “Sophia,” the eternal feminine, are all central themes of Symbolist poetry.²⁰ In his text *Smysl lubvi* (1892–1893; trans. The Meaning of Love, 1985), Solovyov writes about love (including physical love) as a divine intention and a foundation of human existence, which leads to a “reconciliation” of the human with the divine. His central concept is the unification of

16 Clemens Weiler, *Museo Marianne Werefkin* (Ascona: Fondazione Marianne Werefkin, 1970), no page nos.

17 Bernd Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin. Leben und Werk. 1860–1938* (Marianne Werefkin: Life and work), exh. cat. (München: Prestel 1988), 82–95.

18 Works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911) were posthumously exhibited in the circle of the *Mir iskusstva* artists in Vilnius, Kaunas, and Moscow in 1911 and in St. Petersburg in 1912. Laima Lauckaitė mentions that Kandinsky, probably prompted by Werefkin, invited him to participate in the second exhibition of *Der Blaue Reiter*. She also points out similarities of motifs in the work of Werefkin and Čiurlionis. See Laima Lauckaitė “M.K. Čiurlionis and Marianne von Werefkin: Their paths and watersheds,” *LITUANUS. Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 49 (2003) 4: www.lituanus.org/2003/03_4_03.htm.

19 Jelena Hahl-Koch, *Marianne von Werefkin und der russische Symbolismus* (Marianne Werefkin and Russian Symbolism) (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1967).

20 Aleksej Losev, *Vladimir Solovyov i ego vremya* (Vladimir Solovyov and His Time) (Moscow: Progress, 1990).

the masculine and the feminine elements in order to achieve the androgyne, a consummate being that would unite features of both genders.²¹

The theme of androgyny discussed here, which is based on Plato's legend of the originally unified human being's division into two parts that subsequently seek one another, was often debated by the Symbolists. According to Ivanov, the greek god Dionysus united the feminine and the masculine element.²² The Russian poet and philosopher Vasily Rozanov also spoke about the *dvupolost*, the "third gender," as the highest category of humanity. In his 1931 essay *Tayna Zapada: Atlantida-Evropa* (Mystery of the West: Atlantis-Europe), Merezhkovsky is making reference to Solovyov and Rozanov when he describes a "consummate being"—"the androgyne"—that is to unite both genders.²³ The concept of an ideal gender for the artist was much discussed: This was to embody a synthesis of the inner dichotomies of humanity in the state of the creative act.²⁴ There is no question that Solovyov's ideas about love as well as the notions of a sought-after unity of the human being that were to be found in Symbolist circles find an echo in Werefkin's works.

I Am Not Man, I Am Not Woman, I Am Me

Bernd Fäthke positions Werefkin at the center of the turn-of-the-century art world and thus elevates her from the "helper and comrade" (Hildebrandt) to

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- 21 Vladimir Solovyov, *Smysl ljubvi*, particularly Chapters 3 and 4: http://royallib.com/book/solovev_vladimir/smysl_lyubvi.html. See also *Russky eros ili filosofija ljubvi v Rossii* (Russian Eros or the Philosophy of Love in Russia), ed. by V.P. Shestakov (Moscow: Progress 1991).
- 22 According to Rosanov, the first Adam was perfect before Eve was made out of him, see Vassily Rosanov, *Ludi lunnogo sveta* (Moonlight People) (St. Petersburg: Self-edition 1913). http://royallib.com/book/rozanov_v/lyudi_lunnogo_sveta.html; Vyacheslav Ivanov, "Dionis i pradiionisiystvo" (Dionysos and Pre-Dionysianism), *Simvol* 65 (2015), 192–193.
- 23 Dmytry Merezhkovsky, *Tayna Zapada. Atlantida-Evropa* (Mystery of West. Atlantis—Europe) (Moscow: Russkaja kniga 1992), 248.
- 24 Olga Matic, "Androgyny and the Russian Religious Renaissance," in *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature*, ed. Anthony Mlikotin (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1979), 379–407; Ekonen, *Tvoretz, subyekt, zhenshina*, 83; Michel Niqueux, "Le mythe de l'androgyne dans la modernité russe" (The myth of the androgyne in Russian modernism), in *La femme dans la modernité* (The woman in modernism) (Lyon: Université Jean Moulin, 2002), 139–148.

the teacher of her male partner.²⁵ Her 1910 self-portrait (fig. 9.4) reveals the role she assigned to herself. Through the attributes of femininity—her large women's hat and the low neckline of her dress—it initially seems more conventional than the portrait of Gippius. The glowing red eyes fixated on the viewer, the tense turning of the head, the elongated neck, and the face filled with restless power as well as the integration of the figure into the dynamic lines of its painterly surroundings bear a clear resemblance to that divine energy referred to in the Renaissance as *terribilità*. When this self-portrait is compared with her portraits painted by Gabriele Münter or Erma Bossi, we recognize Werefkin's intention of giving expression not only to a newly attained creative power but also to the consummation of her nature, which she has finally achieved.

Everyone who knew Werefkin talked about her strong and dominant personality; younger male companions, such as Alexander Salzmann, were drawn



FIGURE 9.4
Marianne Werefkin, Self-Portrait, c. 1910,
tempera on cardboard, 51 × 34 cm
 STÄDTISCHE GALERIE IM LENBACHHAUS,
 MUNICH

25 Bernd Fäthke, "Marianne Werefkin—'des blauen Reiterreiterin'" (Marianne Werefkin—"Amzon of the Blue Rider"), in *Marianne Werefkin. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), exh. cat. (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie; Bremen: Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, 2014), 24–69.

to her to the point of slavish devotion.²⁶ This often led to discord, both with some women and with other strong personalities like Kandinsky. Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, the wife of August Macke, was also somewhat disconcerted when she met Werefkin for the first time:

It was a strange milieu, a jumble of old-fashioned furniture, artists' things, oriental rugs, embroidery, and photographs of ancestors. Both were descendants of the ancient nobility; Werefkin's brother had been the governor of Vilnius before the war. She had an exceptionally vivacious and strong personality, full of a revolutionary spirit against everything half-hearted and timid. We saw her first as we walked into Jawlensky's studio; she turned her back to us—a slender, tall figure with a bright red blouse, a dark skirt, and black patent-leather belt, a wide taffeta bow in her hair. We thought a young girl was standing there. When she turned around, we could see the expressive face bearing the traces life had left on an aging woman; when she became agitated, she menacingly waved her right hand—which was missing its middle finger—around in the air... she was also master of the house, she made the decisions and everything had to go according to her will...²⁷

The visitor was irritated by these living conditions; on the whole, she found Jawlensky more sympathetic than Werefkin. Her encounter with the dancer Alexander Sacharoff led to further disconcertment: Both artists used him as a model and he “often had on women's dresses.”²⁸ For Sacharoff, cross-dressing

26 Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin*, 44.

27 “Es war ein seltsames Milieu, ein Durcheinander von altmodischen Möbeln, künstlerischen Dingen, orientalischen Teppichen, Stickereien und Fotografien von Ahnen. Beide stammten aus altem Adel, der Bruder der Werefkin war vor dem Kriege Gouverneur von Wilna. Sie war eine ungemein temperamentvolle, starke Persönlichkeit, voll revolutionären Geistes gegen alles Laue und Ängstliche. Wir sahen sie zuerst, als wir in Jawlenskys Atelier eintraten, sie kehrte uns den Rücken zu, eine schmale, hochgewachsene Gestalt mit knallroter Bluse, einem dunklen Rock und schwarzem Lackgürtel, im Haar eine breite Taftschleife. Man glaubte, ein junges Mädchen stünde da. Als sie sich umdrehte, sah man das vom Leben geprägte, ausdrucksvolle Gesicht einer alternden Frau, die, wenn sie in Bewegung geriet, mit ihrer rechten Hand, an der der Mittelfinger fehlte—, drohend in der Luft herum gestikulierende [...] sie hatte auch die Herrschaft im Hause, sie bestimmte, und nach ihrem Willen mußte alles gehen ...” Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, *Erinnerungen an August Macke* (Memories of August Macke), (Frankfurt Main: Fischer, 1987), 190.

28 “oft in Frauenkleider steckten,” *ibid.*, 191.

represented an extension of the expressive possibilities of modern dance, which sometimes included the transgression of gender roles. For Werefkin and Jawlensky, the depiction of the male dancer in female form was additionally connected with their study of the Japanese woodcut, in which male actors in female roles formed a common motif.²⁹

Ascona and Monte Verità: The Two Worlds of Marianne Werefkin

After she moved to Ascona in 1918, the “baroness” played an important role in the eccentric society of Monte Verità. There, according to Robert Landmann, she was one of the “four matadors” and strode, “escorted by ephebes, through the narrow streets of Ascona, across the piazza and through the little dance halls.”³⁰

This international center of the *Lebensreform* movement was located near Locarno and emerged around 1900, when a group of nonconformists surrounding Henri Oedenkoven, Ida Hoffman, and the brothers Gustav and Karl Gräser founded a vegetarian community on the hill Monte Monescia, which they called Monte Verità.³¹ A particularly characteristic feature of this community was their reform of men’s and women’s clothing. Werefkin’s picturesque style fit in well there: She wore colorful dresses, simple canvas shoes, numerous necklaces and striking head coverings—a headscarf or an oriental fez hat.

Around 1918, Ascona was a world-famous artists’ colony that attracted not just sun worshippers and vegetarians but also the adherents of mystical and alternative movements of every kind as well as pacifists and avant-garde

29 Fäthke, *Marianne Werefkin*, 97–99.

30 “vier Matadoren [...] von Epheben begleitet, durch die engen Straßen von Ascona, über die Piazza und durch die Tanzlokale,” Landmann names Baron von der Heydt, Dr. Max Emden, and Charlotte Bara as the other three, in *Ascona—Monte Verità. Auf der Suche nach dem Paradies* (Ascona—Monte Verità: Searching for Paradise) (Frauenfeld et al.: Huber 2009), 249.

31 There is extensive secondary literature on Monte Verità. Regarding the lifestyle and organizational aspects, see Andreas Schwab, *Monte Verità—Sanatorium der Sehnsucht* (Monte Verità: Sanatorium of yearning) (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 2003); Ulrike Voswinckel, *Freie Liebe und Anarchie. Schwabing—Monte Verità. Entwürfe gegen das etablierte Leben* (Free Love and anarchy. Schwabing—Monte Verità: Concepts against traditional life) (Munich: Allitera-Verlag, 2009).

artists. For most of them, Ascona meant not the idyllic little town along the Lago Maggiore but the exhilarating life on the hill—with carnival festivities and the performances of Rudolf von Laban’s dance school and the *Ordo Templi Orientis* of the freemason Theodor Reuß, who held his “Oriental World Congress” there. The community developed into a subsidiary site of the Zurich Dada movement: Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Hans Arp, and Sophie Taeuber were acquaintances of Werefkin.

She was a part of things everywhere, and here she also once again met many German friends, for example, Maria Marc, Franziska von Reventlow, and Else Lasker-Schüler. Furthermore, her circle included another extravagant Russian woman, Baronette Antonietta de Saint-Léger, who lived on the nearby Brissago Islands, which she had once owned. Together with his life partner Eduard Meyer, the Baltic German Baron Elisar von Kupffer built *Elisarion* in Locarno, an erotic male paradise where gender roles were redefined in the philosophy of “Clarism” (fig. 9.5).

It was also Werefkin who saved Monte Verità from financial ruin by arranging its sale to the banker Baron Eduard von der Heydt. He was highly impressed with his companion, who was twenty-two years older than him:



FIGURE 9.5
 Elisar von Kupffer, *Klarwelt der Seligen*,
 1923–30, detail from a tondo in the Rotunde
 of the Villa Sanctuarium Artis Elisarion,
 Minusio, postcard

LIMMAT VERLAG ZÜRICH, NR. 2264

Like many interesting Russian women, she possessed not only great charm but also a persuasive manner of speaking and of looking at you. With flashing eyes, she asked me whether I had already seen the pearl of Ascona, the “Monte Verità,” to which I said no. I had never heard anything about a Monte Verità before. We agreed to meet the next day to go on an outing there together, and she told me the remarkable history of the hill in abbreviated form... As I took in the stories of Lady von Werefkin with rapt attention and walked across the hill with her, I was delighted by Monte Verità’s beauty and one-of-a-kind location.³²

The “interesting Russian woman” was on close terms with both the bohemia, which regarded her highly as an artist, and the ordinary inhabitants of Ascona, who respectfully called her *la Signora*. Elsa Lasker-Schüler is describing this double role when she refers to Werefkin in her poem as “noble street urchin.”³³ Her burial according to Orthodox ritual also became a unique event at which these two worlds came together.

The turn-of-the-century crisis of the old world order as well as the emerging *Lebensreform* movement and women’s liberation led to changes in the role of women in society and to the development of a new awareness of the body, which found expression in nudism, expressive dance, reform dresses, and cross-dressing. In 1905, the sociologist Georg Simmel drew attention to fashion’s twofold function in society: On the one hand, he sees it as a sign of distinction and, on the other hand, as an expression of the “psychological tendency to imitation,” which corresponds to the dualistic nature of the

32 “Sie hatte wie viele interessante Russinnen nicht nur einen großen Charme, sondern auch eine überzeugende Art zu sprechen und einen anzuschauen. Mit blitzenden Augen fragte sie mich, ob ich schon die Perle Asconas, den ‚Monte Verità‘, gesehen hätte, was ich verneinte. Ich hatte von einem Monte Verità noch nie etwas gehört. Wir verabredeten für den nächsten Tag eine gemeinsame Tour dorthin, und sie erzählte mir in kurzen Stichworten die merkwürdige Geschichte dieses Berges [...] Als ich mit gespannter Aufmerksamkeit den Erzählungen der Frau von Werefkin lauschte und mit ihr über den Berg schritt, war ich begeistert von der Schönheit und einzigartigen Lage von Monte Verità.” Eduard von der Heydt and Erich Mühsam, *Ascona und sein Berg Monte Verità* (Ascona and Its Mountain Monte Verità) (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1979), 159–160.

33 “adeliger Straßenjunge,” see Else Lasker-Schüler, “Marianne von Werefkin,” in *Else Lasker-Schüler. Sämtliche Gedichte* (Else Lasker-Schüler: All Poems) (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1966), 223.

human being.³⁴ Simmel incorporates his analysis into a more comprehensive philosophical discourse, with which he gains insight into thought processes that can also be found in the œuvre of Werefkin and in the work of other artists of the period: the yearning for the original unity of a world that seemed incomplete to them.

34 “Denn der Mensch ist ein dualistisches Wesen von Anbeginn an; und dies verhindert die Einheitlichkeit seines Tuns so wenig, daß es grade erst als Ergebnis einer Vielfachheit von Elementen eine kraftvolle Einheit zeigt.” Georg Simmel, “Philosophie der Mode” (Philosophy of Fashion), *Moderne Zeitfragen* (Questions of Modern Time), 11 (1905): 5–41, see also http://www.modetheorie.de/fileadmin/Texte/s/Simmel-Philosophie_Mode_1905.pdf.

SECTION 2

*The Œuvre of the Women Artists in Marianne
Werefkin's Circle and Beyond*



PART 3

*The Women Artists in Marianne Werefkin's
Immediate Circle*



Erma Bossi

Carla Pellegrini Rocca

Abstract

Little is known about the life and work of Erma Bossi (Erminia Bosich); information about her time in Paris is not entirely reliable; most of the works she produced after her return to Italy in 1920 have disappeared. This essay provides a comprehensive account of this almost forgotten artist and her work that reaches from Bossi's childhood and youth in the multicultural milieu of Trieste to her art studies in Munich, her involvement in the New Artists' Association Munich, her time in Paris, and her return to Italy, where she settled in Milan. The author traces Bossi's artistic development and identifies a number of her paintings, the majority of which are thought to be lost.

Little is known about the life of Erma Bossi (1875–1952), whose actual name was Erminia Bosich. The little information that exists about her youth and her life in Paris is unreliable or unverifiable. The majority of the works she created after her permanent return to Italy in 1920 have disappeared or could no longer be found, in spite of my twenty-year search.¹ Nonetheless, a few solo exhibitions and her participation in annual exhibitions in Milan, Venice, and Trieste can be documented. Bossi also exhibited her work in Florence a few times in the mid-1940s. Her last solo exhibition took place in 1949 at the Gussoni-Barbaroux gallery in Milan.² While the owner of the gallery, Ms. Barbaroux, lived until the late 1970s, her mistrust nonetheless made her refuse to provide me with comprehensive information about the artist.

In 1990, in Ortona (Abruzzi), I managed to locate Bossi's niece, Annamaria Delectis, and nephew, Adolfo Bossi, both in their eighties.³ When I visited them,

1 See Carla Pellegrini Rocca, "Eine Galeristin auf den Spuren einer schwer zu fassenden Künstlerin" (A Galerist Tracing a Hard to Get Woman Artist), in *Erma Bossi. Eine Spurensuche* (Erma Bossi. Hunting for Clues), ed. Sandra Uhrig, exh. cat. (Murnau: Schloßmuseum, 2013), 56–70.

2 Pellegrini Rocca, "Eine Galeristin auf den Spuren einer schwer zu fassenden Künstlerin," 63–66.

3 Annemarie Delectis was the daughter of Erma's youngest sister Nella, who was not registered in Trieste's population register. Adolfo Bossi was an illegitimate child of another sister Elisa.

only Adolfo was present, but I succeeded in viewing also Delectis's collection. The meeting with Adolfo was extremely important for my research because he revealed many previously obscure details about their family. In addition, he gave me all of the photographs that he had of Erma: Erma as a young woman (fig. 10.1) and as an old woman, Erma by herself, Erma with her sister Ersilia and with her loyal little white dog, Erma on outings with friends and at her easel (fig. 10.2). With these photographs, I finally succeeded in providing her with a face. Adolfo then also explained to me why the painter sometimes signed her works as Erma Barrera Bossi, although she was neither married nor a member of the Barrera family. Carlo Barrera, who was born in Albogasio (South Tyrol) in 1865, was an Italian tenor who lived in Tbilisi (Georgia). There was a long and grand love story between him and Erma Bossi: Their love was so great that the sick Barrera, accompanied by his young Russian wife Nadia Solokova, returned to Italy in 1938 in order to "die in the arms of Erma."⁴



FIGURE 10.1 *Erma Bossi, Atelier Cir-covich in Trieste, c. 1900, photograph*
ARCHIVIO CARLA
PELLEGRINI, MILAN



FIGURE 10.2 *Erma Bossi in her studio in Milan, late 1930s, anonymous photographer*

4 Adolfo Bossi in a personal interview with the author.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate Nadia Solokova.⁵ In the case of meeting her, I had hoped to ask her how Erma Bossi and Carlo Barrera could have stayed in touch over the course of thirty years, when no letters between them have emerged or been found. The same also applies to the letters to her sister Ersilia, with whom Erma was very close. Handwritten documents from Bossi are rare in general: There are two postcards to Gabriele Münter and Wassily Kandinsky—one sent from Pisa on September 28, 1910, the other from Munich on December 7, 1910—preserved at the Gabriele Münter- und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung in Munich, and a short biography written by her—which is, however, very inexact and sometimes includes false information—found in the Museo Revoltella in Trieste, as well as a note from 1926 with her address in Milan, which is preserved at the Werefkin Foundation. This last document is important to the extent that it proves that her connection to Werefkin had not come to an end.

The Period in Trieste

The first of nine children, Erma Bossi was born in Pula, in what is now Croatia, and actually in the year 1875—not in 1882 or 1885, as she herself wrote and has accordingly been included in many catalogues.⁶ Both of her parents were from Trieste and lived in Pula, where her father worked as a boiler operator aboard the ships of the royal navy. She was the only one of the children to grow up in Trieste, with the Fassel sisters, who were not related to her family. They looked after her upbringing and schooling throughout her childhood. In the catalogue accompanying the monographic exhibition *Erma Bossi: Eine Spurensuche* (Erma Bossi: Hunting for Clues) which was presented in 2013 at the Schlossmuseum Murnau, Sergio Vatta describes in detail the social and cultural milieu of this city while it was still a part of the Austrian Empire.⁷ According to Vatta, Trieste—following Vienna and Prague—was the third

5 After the death of Barrera, Nadia Solokova, born in a suburb of Moscow on December 30, 1907, lived in Milan and in Chiavari until 1981. However, we were unable to contact her there.

6 Catalogo del Civico Museo Revoltella. Prima Edizione, Trieste: Ed. Libreria S.A., 1933, 157; Pellegrini Rocca, “Eine Galeristin auf den Spuren einer schwer zu fassenden Künstlerin,” 60.

7 Sergio Vatta, “Triester Künstler in München. Die Ausbildung einer Malerin” (Translation), in *Erma Bossi. Eine Spurensuche* (Erma Bossi: Hunting for Clues), ed. Sandra Uhrig, exh. cat. (Murnau: Schloßmuseum, 2013), 33–55.

most important city in the empire. This very international city was inhabited by Croatians, Greeks, Armenians, Levantines, and Britons, who all had different native languages but, according to Vatta, used the Trieste dialect to speak with each other:

In those years—within this odd mixture of languages and customs so rich in impulses and contradictions—a few of the greatest writers and poets of the continent were at work, such as Hektor Schmitz, known by his pseudonym Italo Svevo, the poet Umberto Saba, and the Irish émigré writer James Joyce, who lived [...] in Trieste between 1904 and 1920.⁸

Vatta additionally cites several letters from 1912 by Egon Schiele, in which he enthusiastically tells his friend and fellow artist Anton Peschka about the multicultural city and suggests doing an exhibition there together, because that is where the best and moreover also well-frequented galleries and artists' associations are.⁹ According to Vatta, the women of Trieste were already very emancipated both socially and culturally. This was rare in the Europe of those years, when we recall to mind that just gaining access to universities was made very difficult for women—and asserting one's own ability was even more difficult. The only exception may have been Russia, where female artists like Natalia Goncharova, Lyubov Popova, Varvara Stepanova, and Nadezhda Udaltsova played an important role in the avant-garde movement in the first decades of the twentieth century and were esteemed highly by their colleagues and husbands.

Returning to Bossi's life: In 1893, age 18 and having completed her advanced secondary-school diploma (*Matura*), she decided to dedicate herself to painting and to begin studying art. Unfortunately, Trieste did not possess an academy of art and thus it was not until 1904 that Bossi arrived at her resolution to enroll at the "ladies' academy" of the Artists' Association in Munich. However, she had already been exhibiting at the Schollian gallery since 1897. A review that appeared in the Trieste newspaper *L'Indipendente* (1877–1923) praised a pastel drawing that she had exhibited and emphasized her intuitive approach

8 "In diesem sonderbaren, an Anregungen und Gegensätzen so reichen Gemisch an Sprachen und Bräuchen wirken in jenen Jahren der größten Schriftsteller und Dichter des Kontinents wie Hektor Schmitz, mit Künstlernamen Italo Svevo, der Dichter Umberto Saba und der irische Exilschriftsteller James Joyce, der zwischen 1904 und 1920 in Triest [...] lebte," Vatta, "Triester Künstler in München," 34–35.

9 *Ibid.*, 35.

to color.¹⁰ In the spring of 1904, before she left Trieste for good, she took part in the international exhibition of the artists' association with two pastel drawings: *Danzatrenice spagnola* (Spanish Dancer) and *Il giogo* (The Yoke). Neither of the works is reproduced in the catalogue, instead, they are only listed under the numbers 10 and 11.¹¹ In an anonymous review of June 5, 1905, in the city's most important newspaper, *Il Piccolo* (1881–present), the works are described as follows:

Here we would also like to talk about a young woman, Ms. Erminia Bosich, whether she really ought not to be granted a place among the truly consummate artists [...] and, because I have now mentioned the name of Erminia Bosich and ladies are always permitted to go first, we will thus begin with her, although she is after all not so delicately strung in her art as our preconceptions generally cause us to perceive femininity. Because her pastels are modelled with an almost violent energy and possess a coloristic force of illumination so vigorous and daring that they impress those viewers who are not accustomed to reminiscences of Iberian tonal keys, particularly of the kind perceived in the *Danzatrice Spagnola* (no. 10), which we find less pleasing than *Il giogo* (no. 11), in which the perception of color seems to possess a greater balance....¹²

However, because these works were not reproduced, no trace at all is left of them. Here it is important to point out that, from the beginning of her career, Bossi distinguished herself through her skillful orchestration of light and a very individual, forceful manner of painting.

10 "Rassegna Artistica. Un ritratto" (Art Exhibition. A Portrait), *L'Indipendente*, Trieste, June 1, 1897, no page nos.

11 *Catalogo della Esposizione internazionale* (Catalogue of an International Exhibition), exh. cat. (Trieste: Stablimento Tip.-Lit. Emilio Sambo, 1904), cat. 10 and 11.

12 "Vorremmo parlare qui ancora di una signorina, di Erminia Bosich, se a questa non fosse dovuto il posto tra gli artisti veramente compiuti [...] e dal momento che mi occorre di accennare al nome della signorina Erminia Bosich, e che alla donna va fatto sempre l'onore di precedenza, così incominciamo da lei, se anche essa non sia proprio in arte così delicata, come il pregiudizio ci vuole sempre far figurare la femminilità. E di fatti i suoi pastelli sono modellati con energia quasi violenta ed hanno un impeto di colore così acceso di luci arrischiate da impressionare l'osservatore non pratico a trovare nell'assieme dell'opera forti reminiscenze di moderne iberiche tonalità, quali si riscontrano specialmente nella *Danzatrice spagnola* (10), che ci piace meno del *Giogo* (11) ove la percezione cromatica ci sembra più equilibrata." "Esposizione del Circolo Artistico" (Exhibition of the Artists' Circle), *Il Piccolo*, Trieste, June 5, 1904, no page nos.

Thus, it is here that, almost as in a detective novel, the riddle of the works created in Italy begins—all or almost all of which are scattered, lost, or impossible to locate, even those that I saw myself and photographed in the collections of Adolfo Bossi and Delectis in Ortona.¹³ When I returned to Ortona, having been commissioned by the Schlossmuseum Murnau to select works and to arrange for their loan, most of them were no longer there. Adolfo Bossi, who lived alone, had died after moving to Iesolo, and Delectis no longer knew where the majority of her works and those of Adolfo were. However, she was then happy to loan the few remaining works, which she had locked in a storage room.

Bossi and the Neue Künstlervereinigung München

Bossi's presence in Trieste can thus be documented until the beginning of the century. It is unclear whether she had been in Paris prior to enrolling at the Munich "ladies' academy" or only between 1904 and 1909, before she took part in the first exhibition of the Munich-based artist's association known as the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Artists' Association Munich, NKVM). It is unquestionable that the influence of French painters is perceptible throughout her entire oeuvre (fig. 10.3). She was definitely familiar with the work of the Nabis, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and other avant-garde artists. In a 1930 interview with Cesara Mottironi, Bossi relates that she had studied under Anton Ažbe (1862–1905) and Heinrich Knirr (1861–1944) at the "ladies' academy"—where she was, however, apparently not officially enrolled—and that she then quickly met Alexander Kanoldt (1881–1939) and Adolf Erbslöh (1881–1947) and kept company with them (fortunately, at least this statement was confirmed by Erbslöh's widow).¹⁴ Thanks to these two artists—perhaps in 1908—she met Kandinsky, Jawlensky, Münter, and Werefkin. The founding members of the NKVM must have recognized her sense of color and of the autonomy of the composition. In the NKVM's manifesto of January 1909, its founders—Kandinsky, Jawlensky, Münter, Erbslöh, Kanoldt, Kubin, and Werefkin—declare that those artists are welcome who, though they differ

13 For reproductions of the works photographed by me, which later disappeared, see Pellegrini Rocca, "Eine Galeristin auf den Spuren einer schwer zu fassenden Künstlerin," 68–70.

14 Cesara Mottironi, "Erma Bossi," *Cultura Muliebre* (Women's Culture) (1939) 9: 2.



FIGURE 10.3 Erma Bossi, *Stillleben mit Vase und Messer* (*Still Life with a Vase and a Knife*), no date, oil on chipboard, 48.5 × 38 cm
PRIVATE COLLECTION

from one another, are united by their wish to unite depictions of nature and the world with their inner world and thus, casting aside the superfluous, to arrive at a new form of art.¹⁵

On December 1 of the same year, the first exhibition of the NKVM opened at the Galerie Thannhauser. Bossi was already a member of the group at that point in time and took part with six paintings: *Bildnis* (Portrait, no. 12), *Zwei Frauen* (Two Women, no. 13), *Zirkus*¹⁶ (Circus, no. 14), *Café Blanche, Paris* (no. 15), *Moulin Rouge, Paris* (no. 16), and *Auf dem Balkon*¹⁷ (On the Balcony,

15 Helmut Friedel and Annegret Hoberg, *Der Blauer Reiter* (The Blue Rider), exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 26.

16 *Zirkus* (Circus), 1909, oil on cardboard, 64 × 79 cm, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, permanent loan from the Gabriele Münter- und Johannes Eichner-Stiftung.

17 Possibly identical with the painting *In der Oper* (At the Opera), 1909/10, oil on cardboard, 67.7 × 48 cm, private collection, Wiesbaden.

no. 16a).¹⁸ The exhibition catalogue also indicates prices, which make it apparent that Bossi's works were valued somewhat lower than those of Kandinsky and Jawlensky and higher than those of Münter. However, the exhibition was met with strong rejection among the general public and elicited devastating reviews; the same was true of the group's second exhibition, in 1910, which also took place at the Galerie Thannhauser. There, Bossi was once again represented by six works: *Trio* (no. 4), *Mondnacht* (Moonlit Night, no. 5, fig. 10.4), *Abendstimmung* (Evening Ambience, no. 6), *Garten* (Garden, no. 7), *Stilleben* (Still Life, no. 8), and *Tristan und Isolde* (no. 9).¹⁹



FIGURE 10.4 Erma Bossi, *Mondnacht* (*Moonlit Night*), 1910, oil on cardboard, 66 × 86.5 cm
PRIVATE COLLECTION

18 *Neue Künstler-Vereinigung München e. V.* (New Artists' Association Munich), (Munich 1909), cat. 12–16a, cat. 14 with ill.

19 *Ibid.*, 13, cat. 4–9, cat. 5 with ill.

Bernd Fäthke has analyzed many paintings by Bossi in detail—and, indeed, not just those that were to be seen at the three exhibitions of the NKVM.²⁰ He emphasizes the influence of French artists on each work without forgetting to point out the differences, for example, in the use of color and the composition.²¹ I am not an art critic, but I can say that it were works like *Abendstimmung*, *Mondnacht*, and *Badende* (Bathers) that convinced me to carry on with my laborious research. I was fascinated by how Bossi interpreted the atmosphere of a scene with extraordinary colors and, in compositional terms, arrived at an almost geometrical abstraction by omitting naturalistic and superfluous elements.

Around 1909/10, Bossi made both the portrait of Werefkin, who was on a visit to Murnau, and the sketches for the famous portrait of Münter, which was not completed until 1912, as well as the double portrait of Kandinsky and Bossi at a table. It is striking that the faces are unimportant both in the sketches and in the paintings: Bossi's own face is even missing its mouth and eyes. Emphasis is placed on the pose and the gesture. On the canvas, Kandinsky—with his raised hand and pointed finger—seems to be giving instruction to Bossi, who is bent over and leaning on the table, listening intently to the teacher like a little schoolgirl.²² Barbara U. Schmidt concludes from this: "In this way, the contradictory situation of these women is described: While they participated in the avant-garde movements, they were nonetheless simultaneously hardly able to break out of predetermined assignments of gender roles." Fäthke interprets the pose of the two figures entirely differently because, in the preparatory studies, it is Bossi who self-confidently argues with Kandinsky and, in this way, nearly causes him embarrassment.²³

In 1911, as always at the end of the year, the third and final exhibition of the NKVM opened at the Galerie Thannhauser, and Bossi participated with four paintings: *Tänzerinnen* (Dancers, no. 1), *Unter den Palmen* (Under the

20 Bernd Fäthke, "Bossi, ihre Münchner Kollegen und Vorbilder" (Bossi, her Munich colleagues and role models), in *Erma Bossi. Eine Spurensuche* (Erma Bossi. Hunting for clues), ed. Sandra Uhrig, exh. cat. (Murnau: Schloßmuseum, 2013), 71–111.

21 *Ibid.*, 72.

22 Barbara U. Schmidt, "Erma Bossi. Zwischen Paris und Murnau" (Erma Bossi. Between Paris and Murnau), in *Garten der Frauen. Weitgeberinnen der Moderne in Deutschland. 1900–1914* (Women's Garden. Pioneers of Modernity in Germany. 1900–1914), ed. Ulrich Krempel and Susanne Meyer-Büser, exh. cat. (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1996), 241.

23 Fäthke, "Bossi, ihre Münchner Kollegen und Vorbilder," 72.

Palm Trees, no. 2, with reproduction), *Badende* (Bathers, no. 3), and *An der Seine* (Along the Seine, no. 4).²⁴ Kandinsky, Münter, and Bloch, who had recently left the NKVM, simultaneously presented the first exhibition of *Der Blaue Reiter* on another floor of the same gallery. The climate in the association had already changed in the spring of 1911; tensions had emerged. At issue were attitudes towards the influence of French art as well as the desire to attribute more value to the folk art of their native land and to provide more space for the so-called primitive arts, the popular tradition of reverse glass painting and children's drawings. The strongest criticism, however, was directed against the jury's right to evaluate the works that an artist wanted to show, as well as the additional invitation of a few more foreign artists. During the summer, Kandinsky planned an almanac together with Marc, which he would name *Der Blaue Reiter*: its contents were to include literary, musical, and theatrical works and it was to be distributed in Paris, Munich, and Moscow. Their aim was not to propagate a specific form of art, but instead: "In the differences of the represented forms, we intend to show how the inner wish of the artist forms itself in manifold ways."²⁵ In the final jury session before the exhibition of the NKVM, a work by Kandinsky was rejected based on the argument that it was too large and too abstract. The minutes of the meeting do not mention Bossi, who may not have been present or may not have been a member of the jury.²⁶ Kandinsky, Münter, and Marc thus left the NKVM while Kanoldt, Erbslöh, and Bossi remained. Jawlensky and Werefkin also remained, although they affirmed that Kandinsky had been right, condemned the loss of him and Münter, and predicted the end of the NKVM, which they then also left in 1912. The NKVM was finished; it had lost all of its vitality.

24 *Neue Künstler-Vereinigung München e. V.*, Munich 1911, 5, cat. 1–4, cat. 2 with ill.; cat. 3 is the painting *Badende* (ca. 1911, oil on canvas, 60,8 × 85 cm) from the Kunsthalle Emden, Stiftung Henri Nannen.

25 Hans Konrad Röthel, *Der Blaue Reiter in der Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus München* (The Blue Rider in the City Gallery in Lenbachhaus in Munich) (Munich: The Viking Press, 1970), 5.

26 Rosel Gollek, *Der Blaue Reiter im Lenbachhaus München* (The Blue Rider in Lenbachhaus in Munich) (Munich: Prestel, 1974), 11. See also Maria Macke, letter to August Macke, December 2, 1911, including a report on the jury session, cited in Friedel/Hoberg, *Der Blauer Reiter*, 40–41.

The Temporary Station of Paris and the Return to Italy

I have been unable to reconstruct when Bossi began to journey back and forth between Paris and Munich and whether her friendship with Kandinsky and Münter suffered as a result. When the First World War broke out, Marc and Macke went to war—where they would later fall—while the Russians Kandinsky, Werefkin, and Jawlensky left Germany. Bossi lived in Paris during those years, working in the studio of Paul Sérusier and exhibiting at the *Salon d'Automne*: at least that is how she describes things in the biographical document that is preserved at the Museo Revoltella in Trieste and is also reprinted in Cesara Mottironi's 1939 article in *Cultura Muliebre*.²⁷ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to verify this information because no catalogues were printed at the Salon d'Automne during the war and no documents related to the painter's studio are to be found at the Ranson-Serusier foundation.

At the end of the war, Bossi moved back to Italy permanently. As is attested by an official document, she lived in Milan from 1920 until the time of her death and changed addresses there on a yearly basis. She died in April of 1952 at the Sacra Famiglia hospital in Cesano Boscone, where she had been admitted on account of a kidney infection. It is unclear why the Sacra Famiglia was so distrustful and reserved in providing information about Bossi and why they denied that Bossi had died at their institution.

Wilma Giaccaglia, a friend of Bossi from Ancona who kept company with her in her final years, told me in letters and interviews about the poverty in which the formerly internationally famous artist had lived. She occupied a small and Spartan little studio house with her beloved little white dog and with a nephew, who died shortly after her. In order to make ends meet, she painted parchment lampshades for a company from Sesto San Giovanni, all with a blue ground. From 1920 to 1949, Bossi exhibited every year in Milan, Trieste, and Florence at collective exhibitions organized by the former Fascist union for the fine arts. She participated twice in the Biennale di Venezia: first in 1930, with a *Natura morta* (Still Life), and again in 1935—on the 40th anniversary of the biennial—with *I funghi* (The Mushrooms). In Milan, her works could be seen in 1933 at the Galerie Tre Arti and, in 1939, at the Galerie Gianferrari; her solo exhibition at the gallery Gussoni-Barbaroux followed in 1949.²⁸

27 Cesara Mottironi, "Erma Bossi alla Galleria Gianferrari," *Cultura Muliebre* (1939) 2: 12.

28 For information regarding the exhibitions, see Pellegrini Rocca, "Eine Galeristin auf den Spuren einer schwer zu fassenden Künstlerin," 63–65.

It has at least been possible to find a number of catalogues from public exhibitions, in which many works are reproduced. In the case of private galleries, nothing is to be found except invitations and brief exhibition reviews. Unfortunately, almost all of the works presented there by Bossi have thus vanished. Based on the reproductions, which are small and almost all in black and white, as well as the works' titles, it is possible to conclude that Bossi had lost much of her initial energy and occupied herself primarily with still lifes and Italian landscapes featuring traditional motifs like rivers, canals, or farms from the area around Milan—almost as though she were returning to her origins (fig. 10.5). With the exception of a small handful of portraits and still lifes (fig. 10.6), these consist of figurative-naturalistic and somewhat academic works unlike her earlier abstract and sometimes seemingly almost geometrical interpretations of nature.

I still hope to find a museum in Milan, Rovereto, or Trieste that would be willing to devote an exhibition to Erma Bossi, so that her worth could also be recognized in her native land. This is linked to my hopes of actually still finding



FIGURE 10.5 *Erma Bossi, Ponte sul Naviglio (Canal Bridge), no date, water colors on paper, 26.5 × 35 cm*

PRIVATE COLLECTION



FIGURE 10.6
Erma Bossi, *Portrait eines Mädchens* (*Erma Bossis Schwester Nella*) [*Portrait of a Girl* (*Erma Bossi's Sister Nella*)], 1919, oil on cardboard, 72 × 59 cm

PRIVATE COLLECTION

important works created by her after her return to Italy. Perhaps they are to be found in private collections, where they have been forgotten, as in the case of Annamaria Delectis—or in Sicily, where Bossi's sister Ersilia apparently moved with many of her paintings.

Maria Marc's Letters

Kimberly A. Smith

Abstract

Maria Marc began her relationship with Franz Marc as an artist but, after a few years, her role had shifted from ambitious young painter to helpmate and nurturing wife. Franz left much of the regular work of writing to Maria; the postcards and letters penned by her hand gave rise to a collaborative network of artists, theorists, and poets. Indeed, Maria's hand is quietly present in many of the texts that buttress Franz Marc's art, both during and after his lifetime. This essay argues that the assemblage of texts by Maria Marc—letters, postcards, widow's signatures, provenance notes, etc.—should be seen as *productive*. They form the literary tissue against and within which Franz Marc's art emerged, and are thus a generative act in their own right.

Maria Marc hovers like a ghost at the edges of Franz Marc's oeuvre. Married to one of the leading artists of the Expressionist generation, her role in the movement continues to be obscure. She is the ever-present cipher in the heroic *Blaue Reiter* (Blue Rider) narrative, the kind face looking obliquely out from photographs of Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, artists who have long been canonized in the history of German modernism (fig. 11.1). Maria Marc too was a practicing artist, yet few people think of her as more than Franz Marc's unobtrusive companion, if they think of her at all. This essay was written in the context of a conference on women artists active in central European and Russian modernist circles, and certainly Maria Marc is precisely the type of figure who makes such conferences necessary.¹ How can we tell the full history of art if we do not reckon with its women artists and what they too produced? Yet I want to suggest that to properly see Maria Marc's contribution to the history of German modernism, we need to expand and somewhat complicate our definition of "production." To that end, I focus here on Maria's letters—a title that only fully works in English, as it suggests both the "letters" (*Briefe*) that Maria composed, but also the many "letters" (*Buchstaben*) that made up her various

1 I thank the conference organizers, Isabel Wünsche and Tanja Malycheva, and the other participants for their helpful feedback and comments on this research.



FIGURE 11.1 *Members of the Blue Rider group on the balcony of Kandinsky's apartment at Ainmillerstraße 36, Munich, left to right: Maria Marc, Franz Marc, Bernhard Koehler Sr., Heinrich Campendonk, Thomas von Hartmann, Wassily Kandinsky (seated), 1911*

PHOTOGRAPH: GABRIELE MÜNTER. GABRIELE MÜNTER AND JOHANNES EICHNER FOUNDATION, INV. NR. 2205, © 2015 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK / VG BILD-KUNST, BONN

forms of writing. And by doing so, I hope that we may see Maria Marc as more instrumental to the history of Expressionism than is typically acknowledged.

Before she met and married Franz, Maria Marc was Maria Franck, eldest daughter of a well-to-do Berlin family. In keeping with the cultural norms of the day, Franck received the kind of light education thought proper for a middle-class woman. She soon became interested in more serious artistic training, however, and enrolled in a private art academy for women when she was 19 years old. Eight years later, at the age of 27, she moved to Munich and

studied under Max Feldbauer at the only school open to women artists, the ladies' academy of the Künstlerinnen-Verein (Women Artists' Association). She met Franz Marc in 1904, but it was not until 1906 that they began their courtship. Marc was seeing two other women at that time, one of whom (Maria Schnür) he married and then divorced after several months, and Marc and Franck would not settle into their committed relationship for some time. In 1908, the pair traveled to the countryside outside of Munich to live and work together, where Franck produced a series of quixotic illustrations for a proposed children's book. These are marvelous images, playful and peculiar, and at times richly kaleidoscopic; but Franck's artistic goals were thwarted by a series of challenges. She had hoped that Insel Verlag would pick up the children's book, but the publisher ultimately declined the project. In addition, Franck struggled with rheumatoid arthritis in her hands. And finally, for several long months in 1910 and 1911, she was forbidden by her parents to stay with Marc in Sindelsdorf because the couple had not yet gained a dispensation to get married after his first marriage. The strictures put on unmarried women of this era meant that Franck had little choice but to return to her parents' home in Berlin, at precisely the time in which Marc began to build connections with the avant-garde circles in Munich that would become so important for his professional growth.² He traveled to Munich alone where he encountered Kandinsky for the first time, inaugurating the friendship that later led to the *Blaue Reiter* exhibitions and the *Blaue Reiter* almanac. Franck finally was able to leave Berlin, and she made the almost unthinkable decision—considering the bourgeois conventions of the era—to live with Franz Marc in Sindelsdorf as a couple, years before they were officially married. They referred to each other as husband and wife, but were not officially married until 1911 in London, which was acknowledged only by English law, and then finally under German law in 1913.³

In these first years, Franz and Maria together engaged with progressive art and made connections with like-minded artists.⁴ They debated the complexities of aesthetic issues, which both assumed were worth serious time and contemplation, and as partners were willing to breach conservative social and artistic boundaries in the service of great art. In this shared belief in

2 On this topic, see Brigitte Salmen, "Maria Marc—Leben und Lebenswerk," in *Maria Marc im Kreis des "Blauen Reiter"*, exh. cat., ed. Brigitte Salmen (Murnau: Schloßmuseum Murnau, 2004), 11.

3 Susanna Partsch, *Franz Marc: 1880–1916* (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), 16.

4 From this point on, since they then shared the last name of Marc, I will often refer to both artists by their first names to differentiate them.

art's significance, Maria never wavered. Even after Franz's death in 1916, she expressed her gratitude for having "something for whose sake one loves life and through which one can experience everything that gives life value: that is art."⁵ On the other hand, Maria's relationship to this art seems to have begun shifting around this period. She spent less and less time on her own work, due certainly to her continuing struggles with the arthritis in her hand, but also as her confidence in her own artistic talents waned. Maria and Franz had begun as artistic compatriots, and though their marriage was strong and they remained vitally devoted to each other, the balance of their relationship slowly but surely altered on its axis. Franz was ever more committed to the necessity of making his art, and received increasing public attention for this endeavor, while Maria's position gravitated to one of supportive partner rather than autonomous producer. To be clear, she did not completely stop creating her own work, but the emphasis of their shared artistic identity shifted squarely to Franz's contributions to the modernist developments of the *Blaue Reiter*. Moreover, in spite of their progressive attitudes towards both personal and artistic conventions, and their joint faith in the profundity of the aesthetic experience, certain traditional gender roles seem to have fallen readily into place in their married life. Thus, even if we know that she began her relationship with Franz as an artist, and never completely gave that work up, it also seems clear that after a few years, Maria's role had shifted from artist to helpmate, from ambitious young painter to nurturing wife of one of the century's preeminent modernists.⁶ Indeed, recounting the meetings held at Gabriele Münter and Kandinsky's house in Murnau where the ideas for the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter* were first worked out, art historian Gisela Klein has asserted that Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke and Maria Marc "were not artists, but artistic companions, at best the echo and mouthpiece of their husbands, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke with charm and modesty, Maria Marc with the resonant (*volltönenden*) claim to include her with her husband as a 'We.'"⁷

5 "etwas zu haben, um dessentwillen man das Leben liebt und durch das man alles erfahren kann, was dem Leben Wert verleiht:—das ist Kunst." Maria Marc, Letter to Gabriele Münter, #230 (July 15, 1916), in *Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Briefwechsel: Mit Briefen von und an Gabriele Münter und Maria Marc*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (Munich and Zurich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1983), 282.

6 See Bibiana K. Obler, *Intimate Collaborations: Kandinsky & Münter, Arp & Taeuber* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 70.

7 Gisela Klein, *Gabriele Münter und Wassily Kandinsky: Biographie eines Paares* (Frankfurt, 1990), 390, 393; cited in Annegret Hoberg, *Maria Marc: Leben und Werk, 1876–1955*, exh. cat. (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1995), 63.

We have hints from various other, primary sources of how familiar and conventionally gendered this situation had become. For example, in his memoirs, Kandinsky recounted that Franz Marc and he came up with the name *Der Blaue Reiter* while drinking coffee in the garden at Sindelsdorf. "...The name came by itself," Kandinsky writes. "And the enchanting coffee of Frau Maria Marc tasted even better."⁸ So while the men were brainstorming the name of what would become one of the most important episodes in twentieth-century German art, Maria had the task of making coffee. Maria's role as scribe in the marriage might be understood in this way as well. In reference to that trip to Murnau where the almanac was conceived, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke recalled, "... now the 'Blaue Reiter' was born in long sessions with artistic debates, proclamations [*Aufrufen*], proposals for the foreword, etc. These were unforgettable hours, [and] as each of the men composed, improved, revised his manuscript, we women then faithfully transcribed [*abschrieben*] it."⁹ According to Erdmann-Macke's account, then, the women of the group functioned as little more than typists, dutifully recording the big ideas of their ingenious husbands. Making coffee, taking notes—it's no wonder if Maria Marc found it increasingly difficult to imagine herself into the role of autonomous creator.

It is possible to see Maria's many postcards and letters to friends and other members of the artistic community in a similar vein. Maria communicated often with their growing network of artists, art dealers, publishers, and other cultural producers. At times, her comments in this correspondence are exhilarating and perceptive, full of thoughtful and frank reactions to current exhibitions or artistic controversies. But just as often, these missives contain purely practical information, indicating when the couple will be traveling, what works need to be borrowed for exhibitions, and other scheduling items. Franz, on the other hand, is best known for the theoretical essays he wrote for himself and modern art journals. Although he did also write to artists and friends, Franz Marc used his letters and articles as a forum for articulating his aesthetic vision, including color theory and the relationship between art and spirituality. He left much of the regular, functional work of writing to his wife, and it is Maria who wrote many of the letters that practically connected the *Blaue Reiter* network of artists, theorists, and poets. It is often Maria's hand and signature that we find in the communications between the Marcs and professional allies Paul and Lily Klee, August and Elisabeth Macke, or Münter and Kandinsky. Indeed,

8 Wassily Kandinsky, "Der Blaue Reiter (Rückblick)," *Kunstblatt* xiv (1930); cited in Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 344 n22.

9 Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke, *Erinnerung an August Macke* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1962), 187–188.

much of this correspondence occurs precisely between the women in these networks, and a lively exchange can be traced as Maria receives and writes notes to Lisbeth, Lily and Gabriele. Once again, Maria seemed frequently to be occupied with clerical work, a task given to the women who functioned more or less as unpaid secretaries. And so Maria got the job of organizing details, communicating travel plans, and sorting through logistics, while Franz did the "real" work of forging the spiritual, ambitious art of Expressionism.

Here, then, was a woman who exhibited extraordinary resolve given the horizon of possibilities for middle-class women of this era. She tenaciously pursued her artistic training when this was by no means simple, and she refused to abandon a relationship that was as socially risky as it was personally and artistically rewarding, in spite of many opportunities and encouragements to do exactly that. Yet in the end, even she found herself living a reduced life in which she spent much of her energy on housework and secretarial duties, doubted her own talent and training, and lost sight of her creative potential as she was drawn increasingly into her husband's professional orbit. Doesn't this make Maria Marc perfectly symptomatic of the silencing and exclusion of women as producers from the history of art?

And yet, perhaps the story is not as simple as this. Certainly we cannot dismiss the realities that faced Maria Marc as she navigated the challenge of how to occupy the roles of both artist and wife, of autonomous agent and supportive partner. Maria's production as a visual artist suffered from living in a culture which expected that she perform her wifely duties for a husband whose gender afforded the privilege that his expression would be taken seriously while she would have to fight for that same right. One response to this inequity can and should be to unearth Maria Marc's work from the shadows, and give it the attention it has long deserved. Yet, at the same time, feminist art historians have rightly cautioned that we should be careful about assessing the work of women artists according to the standards established by traditional art history. Linda Nochlin taught us this lesson decades ago, and it continues to be relevant.¹⁰ If women's lives and work are evaluated according to conventional art historical terms, they will often seem to come up short given the social and ideological limitations within which they had to function. We must be careful not to reinstate the very structures which necessitate a conference focused on women artists. Yet this puts scholars interested in figures like Maria Marc at somewhat of an impasse. How are we to fairly understand and assess the

10 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *Art News* 69 (January 1971): 22–39; 67–71.

contributions of these women if the art historical game is—to some extent—always and already rigged?

Focusing on Maria Marc's letters, in all senses of that word, may offer a way out of this double bind. For example, through the dozens of letters (*Briefe*) sent and received to the other women and men in their artistic circle, we can follow Maria's active participation in the movement. These letters provided a crucial matrix of communication, and there would quite literally be no Expressionism without this epistolary community which Maria did so much to help create. The postcards and letters penned by her hand gave rise to a collaborative network in which the obligations of modern art were reconceived. Her work as a visual producer had indeed receded, but her prolific writing—by turns prosaic and ruminative, efficient and sensitive—frames the work of her husband, creates space for it, and makes its more visible victories possible. The concept of the *frame* proves useful to this analysis, as it maps well onto the gendered dynamics of artistic expression. Jacques Derrida famously demonstrated that a frame is never simply a frame.¹¹ In both its physical and philosophical meanings, the frame gestures towards the work in a deictic move that present the work as "Art." Its very unobtrusiveness is the hallmark of the frame's continuous labor, its anointed task to inconspicuously mark out the aesthetic from the world beyond, thereby authenticating the work as unique and worthy of reflection. Rather than a singularly autonomous presence, the artwork (*ergon*) is revealed to be not an isolated *work* at all, but a workable fiction set into motion by the frame (*parergon*). All of the machinations of the frame seem at first to be ancillary to the identity of the work itself but, it turns out, as Derrida shows in his brilliant deconstruction of Kantian aesthetics, to be non-essentially essential.

I want to think along these lines, then, about what Maria Marc's letters might mean—her *Briefe* but also her letters [that is, her writing] more widely conceived. Maria's hand is quietly but actively present in many of the texts that buttress Marc's art, during but especially after his lifetime, which takes us to the next part of the story. When Franz died at the Battle of Verdun in 1916, it was an event of enormous sadness for Maria, and her grief is palpable in her letters. Yet Maria's writing during these years extended far beyond this correspondence with friends and colleagues. Shortly after Marc's death, Maria helped to organize a memorial exhibition at the Neue Secession (New Secession) in Munich, and Herwarth Walden also held a memorial exhibition in Berlin at his Sturm Galerie. Walden had exclusive rights to represent Marc's art, but Maria seems to have had serious disagreements with Walden about

11 Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Ian McLeod (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 37–82.

how Marc's legacy should be handled. She wrote about her falling out with Walden in a letter to Münter: "Berlin was not enjoyable because I had all kinds of painful experiences with Walden. What a sad chapter for this art dealer! Even sadder since we had taken him for a friend, and after that he did very disagreeable things, which were a bitter disappointment and robbed [me] of all trust [in him]."¹² Maria severed the relationship with Walden, and from this point on, she assumed sole responsibility for overseeing Franz Marc's *Nachlass*, including all of his art and his correspondence.¹³ This break from Walden has been noted in the existing literature on Maria Marc, but I want to emphasize its importance. This was an extraordinary act of agency on Maria's part, with substantial consequences for how Franz's art would then be presented to the world. Much of what we know about Franz Marc's artistic output is the result of Maria Marc's work with his *Nachlass*, in which her writing is everywhere present. References to what she calls this *Schreiberei* appear again and again in her correspondence. She labored long and diligently on this so-called paper-work, a term that belies its instrumental significance.

Maria Marc's *Schreiberei* included multiple forms of writing. For example, she made extensive, careful notes about the provenance of Franz's art. We know the origins of countless sketches, prints, and paintings because of her accompanying explanations. She wrote meticulous notes, even many years after Franz Marc's death, about how individual works came to be, the context of their production, known references, and Marc's working process. As part of this documentation, she filled out multiple questionnaires for the art historian Alois Schardt, who relied on these texts for his major study of Franz Marc, published in 1936.¹⁴ As important as these questionnaires are, they represent a fraction of the writing Maria did as part of the *Nachlass* project. For example, she meticulously numbered every single page, in every one of Franz's sketch-books from 1904 onwards. Hundreds of pages bear her pagination marks in the lower right-hand corner, numbers in this case rather than letters of course, but

12 "...war Berlin nicht erfreulich, weil ich allerhand peinliche Erfahrungen auch mit Walden machte. Was für ein trauriges Kapitel bilden diese Kunsthändler! und noch trauriger, wenn sich jemand als Freund benimmt und hinterher recht unliebsame Dinge macht, die einen bitter enttäuschen und alles Vertrauen rauben." Maria Marc, Letter to Gabriele Münter, #231 (December 28, 1916), in *Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Briefwechsel*, 283–284.

13 Hoberg, *Maria Marc: Leben und Werk*, 92; Annegret Hoberg, *Franz und Maria Marc* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2004), 101–102.

14 Alois J. Schardt, *Franz Marc* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1936). On the questionnaires, see Angelica Zander Rudenstine, *The Guggenheim Museum Collection: Paintings 1880–1945*, vol. II (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1976), 484.



FIGURE 11.2 Franz Marc, *Two Sleeping Cats*, *Sketchbook v*, p. 16, 1907, pencil, 16.6 × 23 cm
GERMANISCHEN NATIONALMUSEUM, NUREMBERG

still in Maria's hand (fig. 11.2), it is still her writing. In the recent three-volume catalogue raisonné of Franz Marc's art, Annegret Hoberg notes that the volume dedicated to his drawings and sketchbooks depended on Maria Marc's notations to organize the images and their provenance.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Maria Marc signed the back of numerous prints after Franz Marc's death. And she used the *Nachlass* stamp along with her own signature to designate sketches, drawings, or impressions that had been created by Marc, and were found in his studio after his death (fig. 11.3). The stamp and the signature testify to the authenticity of the work, yet it is of course *Maria's* signature that functions in the traditional authorial role of validating the image as genuine (fig. 11.4). It is her signature—her letters—that bolster what Michel Foucault called the author function,¹⁵ assuring viewers and buyers that these are genuine Franz Marc pieces, and thus sending them safely off to be taken up by the markets and histories of art. Collectors interested in acquiring a Franz Marc print or sketch will likely purchase an image bearing Maria Marc's *Nachlass* stamp and her signature. In 2001, for example, Sotheby's in London put Franz Marc's *Ruhende Pferde* (Resting Horses) up for auction, with Maria Marc's signature on the back. It sold for 26,000 pounds (about 35,000 euros).¹⁶

Maria Marc's writings performed (and continue to perform) a significant constitutive function of authenticating Franz Marc's Expressionist art. The

15 Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 124–127.

16 Sotheby's London, Old Master and Contemporary Prints, Lot 159 (July 6, 2001).



FIGURE 11.3 Franz Marc, *Lizards*, 1912, woodblock print, 12.7 × 12.4 cm. Reverse is shown: rectangular stamp “Handdruck vom Originalholzstock bestätigt”: with authentication “Maria Marc” and “E 1071” in pencil. Stamp of the Nierendorf Gallery, New York
SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK ESTATE OF KARL NIERENDORF, BY PURCHASE

spell of the modernist work as an autonomous entity, somehow unhinged and independent from the untidy world outside its frame, has long been broken. The notion of a purely aesthetic object uncorrupted by referentiality or history of any kind, was—we can recognize now—a marvelous fiction. Any work of art is dependent on institutional and other contexts for its authenticity—contexts which establish the terms by which we recognize the object as belonging to the category of art. To paraphrase Joseph Kosuth, any work of art is by definition a proposition. As a propositional truth, then, the perceived authenticity of the work of art lives or dies according to how that utterance can be defended (institutionally or otherwise). The institutional contexts which have participated in this discursive process of authorizing Franz Marc’s art range from the journal *Der Sturm* (The Tempest), which reproduced his woodcut prints, to the Galerie Thannhauser, which provided a space for the *Blaue Reiter* exhibitions. Maria



FIGURE 11.4 *Franz Marc, Farmer with Hayfork, Sketchbook I (verso), 1904, blue pencil on paper, 13.4 × 20.2 cm. With round estate stamp and signature by the artist's widow*

FRANZ MARC MUSEUM, KOCHEL A. SEE FRANZ MARC STIFTUNG,
© BAYER & MITKO, MUNICH

Marc's writings also functioned in this way, as an authorizing mechanism that frames the work of her more visible spouse. And yet in their very unobtrusiveness, these letters and other texts help to support a modernist project that is—as all modernist projects—not nearly as self-sufficient as it seems. Rather than accept Maria Marc's reduction to mere scribe, then, her assemblage of texts—letters, postcards, paginations, widow's signatures, provenance notes, etc.—should be seen as productive. These writings form the literary tissue against and within which Franz Marc's art emerged, and thus Maria Marc's letters are a generative act in their own right, part of the procedural and theoretical story of Expressionism that must be told.

Elisabeth Epstein: Moscow–Munich–Paris–Geneva, Waystations of a Painter and Mediator of the French-German Cultural Transfer

Hildegard Reinhardt

Abstract

The artist Elisabeth Epstein is usually mentioned as a participant in the first *Blaue Reiter* exhibition in 1911 and the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* in 1913. Living in Munich after 1898, Epstein studied with Anton Ažbe, Wassily Kandinsky, and Alexei Jawlensky and participated in Werefkin's salon. She had already begun exhibiting her work in Paris in 1906 and, after her move there in 1908, she became the main facilitator of the artistic exchange between the Blue Rider artists and Sonia and Robert Delaunay. In the 1920s and 1930s she was active both in Geneva and Paris. This essay discusses the life and work of this Russian-Swiss painter who has remained a peripheral figure despite her crucial role as a mediator of the French-German cultural transfer.

Moscow and Munich (1895–1908)

The special attraction that Munich and Paris exerted at the beginning of the twentieth century on female Russian painters such as Alexandra Exter, Sonia Delaunay, Natalia Goncharova, and Olga Meerson likewise characterizes the biography of the artist Elisabeth Epstein née Hefter, the daughter of a doctor, born in Zhytomir/Ukraine on February 27, 1879. After the family's move to Moscow, she began her studies, which continued from 1895 to 1897, with the then highly esteemed impressionist figure painter Leonid Pasternak.¹

Hefter's marriage, in April 1898, to the Russian doctor Miezyślav (Max) Epstein, who had a practice in Munich, and the birth of her only child, Alexander, in March 1899, are the most significant personal events of her ten-year period in Bavaria's capital. After seven years of marriage, however, the couple separated, in 1905; divorce followed in 1911.

1 Elisabeth Epstein, *Lebenslauf* [Curriculum vitae], handwritten manuscript of October 29, 1941, Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, Zurich.

Epstein continued her studies until 1904 in the private schools of Anton Ažbe and Wassily Kandinsky, in Schwabing, as well as in Alexei Jawlensky's painting class. It was in Marianne Werefkin's salon in the Giselstraße that Epstein most likely became acquainted with members of the Russian colony in Munich as well as representatives of the artistic avant-garde. Her circle of friends included the Ukrainian dancer Alexander Sacharoff, the Prague painter Eugen von Kahler, the Moscow painter Olga Meerson, and Gabriele Münter. Remarkably, there is no reference to Marianne Werefkin anywhere in the Epstein correspondence, but both Jawlensky and his son Andrei are mentioned. A close personal relationship between these two painters of a very different nature apparently never arose—quite in contrast to Gabriele Münter.

Paris and Geneva (1908–1914)

In 1908, Epstein felt the urge to “go west” even more strongly than she had when she moved, in 1898, from Moscow to Munich. Private disappointments, but also artistic ambition, may well have played the decisive role in her move to Montparnasse, the heart of European cultural activities, in Paris (fig. 12.1).



FIGURE 12.1

*Elisabeth Epstein sitting
in the garden, anonymous
photographer*

GABRIELE MÜNTER—UND JOHANNES EICHNER-STIFTUNG,
MUNICH

Epstein had begun preparations for a personal as well as artistic new start in Paris already in 1906 and 1907 with her participation in the Salon d'Automne and her acquaintance with the painter and publisher of the art periodical *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, Alexis Mérodack-Jeaneau, who published works by Epstein in 1906. At the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, she practiced her skills in *croquis* drawing. The early years in Paris were initially overshadowed by depression and artist's block. During this time, while restructuring her life and establishing herself in Paris, her son remained with his father in Munich. The move, in 1912, from the center of Paris to the quiet northern suburb of Montmorency brought an apparent improvement in her living conditions. She supported herself in part by painting reproductions in the Louvre. The connection to her Munich friends held strong and, until 1914, Münter and Kandinsky proved to be her two most important ties to the Bavarian art scene. Kandinsky, in particular, remained her most reliable artistic advisor and mentor, but the events of war, however, led to an interruption of these connections that lasted almost two decades.

Epstein and the French–German Cultural Transfer

Just how helpful Epstein's familiarity with the Paris art scene could be for Kandinsky and Franz Marc became apparent in October 1911. Epstein, who had been friends with Sonia Delaunay since their student days in Paris, sent Kandinsky and Marc, who at the time were busy with preparations for the first *Blaue Reiter* (Blue Rider) exhibition, photographs of Robert Delaunay's work and thus established the contact between *Der Blaue Reiter* and this French artist with whom they were previously unfamiliar. Thanks to Epstein's intercession, five works by Delaunay subsequently became part of the *Blaue Reiter* exhibition that travelled around Germany and Europe.² Epstein's credit for arranging this French–German art transfer and thus Delaunay's artistic breakthrough in Germany is well deserved. Sonia Delaunay repeatedly expressed her gratitude for her friend's efforts to see Delaunay included in the *Blaue Reiter*. Epstein herself was represented by the paintings *Porträt* (Portrait, c. 1911) and *Stilleben mit Hut* (Still Life with Hat, c. 1911).³ *Porträt*, no longer extant, was acquired by Kandinsky for his private collection.

2 *Erste Ausstellung der Redaktion „Der Blaue Reiter“* (First Exhibition of the Editors of the Blue Rider), Munich: Moderne Galerie Heinrich Thannhauser, December 18, 1911—March 3, 1912.

3 Elisabeth Epstein, *Porträt* (Portrait), c. 1911, formerly Collection Wassily Kandinsky, technical data and disposition unknown, reproduced in *Erste Ausstellung der Redaktion „Der Blaue Reiter“* (First Exhibition of the Editors of the Blue Rider), exh. cat. (Munich: Moderne Galerie



FIGURE 12.2 *Elisabeth Epstein, Alexander Epstein (Shura),*
c. 1903, oil on canvas, 48.5 × 38.5 cm
 PRIVATE COLLECTION

Of Epstein's early work from Munich and the first years in Paris only a few original works and reproductions can be accounted for. Numerous works were likely lost as a consequence of the war and endless relocation. Possibly the earliest extant work is the portrait of her approximately four-year-old son, *Alexander Epstein (Shura)* (c. 1903, fig. 12.2).⁴ The frontal portrait shows the young boy in a pristine white Russian smock with a large round summer hat. The work *Stilleben (mit Orangen)* [Still Life (With Oranges)], a formally reduced composition in bright impasto colors, originated in Munich in 1905.⁵

Heinrich Thannhauser, 1911), cat. no. 20; see also *Stilleben mit Hut* (Still-Life with Hat), c. 1911, technical data and disposition unknown, reproduction: *Ibid.*, cat. no. 21.

4 *Alexander Epstein (Shura)*, c. 1903, oil on canvas, 48.5 × 38.5 cm, inscribed lower left: E. Epstein, private collection. Color reproduction in Bernd Fäthke, *Elisabeth 1. Epstein*, exh. cat. (Ascona: Galleria Sacchetti, 1989), cat. no. 33.

5 *Stilleben (mit Orangen)* (Still-Life with Oranges), 1905, oil on canvas, 48 × 33.5 cm, inscribed lower left: E. Epstein/1905, private collection. Color reproduction in Fäthke, *Elisabeth 1. Epstein*, cat. no. 29.

The exhibition catalogues of the Salon d'Automne from 1906 and 1907,⁶ as well as the reproductions in *Les Tendances Nouvelles* from 1906,⁷ establish that around 1910 Epstein's color-intensive, sculptural figure paintings of the early period were replaced by a more sharply contoured visualization.

A visit to Epstein in Montmorency by August Macke and Franz Marc and his wife in October 1912 documents not only the friendly relationships among the *Blaue Reiter* exhibition colleagues. Marc's written report⁸ to Kandinsky conveys a concrete impression of Epstein's solitary lifestyle and work in the northern suburb of Paris:

Surrounded by her silent pictures hanging on the walls, Frau Epstein lives, a melancholy life in this provincial little town that in the twilight reminds me of Murnau and Tölz... The portrait of Kahler⁹ once again strongly impressed me, and also a portrait that she had painted of her boy...¹⁰

Macke sketched his artistic colleague during the brief hours they visited: Marc's sketchbooks contain two pencil drawings that were apparently quickly set down on paper in Montmorency by Macke: *Kopfstudie Elisabeth Epstein* (Head Study Elisabeth Epstein) and *Bildnisstudie Elisabeth Epstein* (Portrait

6 *Salon d'Automne*, Paris, 1906, *Enfant avec des fruits*, painting; *Enfant en habit de clown*, painting; *Ma femme de ménage*, painting; *Portrait*, painting, cat. nos. 555–558; also in *Salon d'Automne*, Paris, 1907, *Portrait (Jean M...s)*, painting; *Profil*, painting, cat. nos. 552–553.

7 *Profil*, 1906, inscribed lower left: E Epstein 1906, and *Portrait*, likely 1906, technical data and disposition of both works unknown, in *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, 3 (1906) 34: 494–495. These two works may have been included by Epstein in the 5. *Ausstellung der Neuen Künstlervereinigung* (Exhibition of the New Artists' Association), St. Petersburg, 1908. The authors thank Tanja Malycheva for note in this respect and the translation from: Irina Grigorievna, Devyatyarova, *Elisaveta Epstein. Eine vergessene Künstlerin im russischen Ausland* (Elisaveta Epstein: A Forgotten Female Artist of the Russian Diaspora), *Antikvarnoye obozreniye* (Antiquarian Revue) (2007) 3: 20–22.

8 „Frau Epstein führt in diesem kleinen Provinzstädtchen, das mich in der Dämmerung an Murnau und Tölz erinnerte, ein einsames, melancholisches Leben, zwischen ihren stillen Bildern, die an den Wänden hängen...Sehr stark wirkte wieder das Porträt von Kahler auf mich, dann ein Porträt, das sie von ihrem Knaben gemalt hat...“ Franz Marc, letter to Wassily Kandinsky, Bonn, October 5, 1912, in *Wassily Kandinsky—Franz Marc, Briefwechsel*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (Munich, Zurich: Piper, 1983), 193.

9 *Bildnis Eugen von Kahler* (Portrait of Eugen von Kahler), 1911, technical data and disposition unknown.

10 The latter painting is probably *Alexander Epstein (mit Buch)* (Alexander Epstein with Book) 1911, oil on canvas, 57 × 46 cm, inscribed lower right E. Epstein, color reproduction in Fäthke, *Elisabeth I. Epstein*, cat. no. 32, Galleria Sacchetti, Ascona.

Study Elisabeth Epstein).¹¹ In Herwarth Walden, owner of the Sturm Galerie in Berlin, Epstein found a dedicated advocate for her art. He showed two of her works in the 1912 *Blaue Reiter* exhibition¹² and two in the 1913 *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* (First German Autumn Salon).¹³ Additionally, he offered the polyglot painter the opportunity to publish two German-language essays in his art and literary magazine *Der Sturm*: The 1912 essay *Einige Gedanken über Bildentstehung* (Some Thoughts on How an Image Arises) and the 1913 essay *Das Lächerlichsein* (Being Ridiculous).¹⁴

Geneva and Paris (1914–1956)

The onset of the First World War forced Epstein to relocate to Geneva, and her son, who because of his Russian nationality was viewed in Munich as an “undesirable alien,” soon followed. In Geneva, Epstein made contact with the Austrian writer Walter Serner, publisher of the magazine *Sirius*, and the German painter Christian Schad, who twice painted Epstein and once her son. The close personal and artistic relationship with Schad led in 1918 to the double exhibition *Elisabeth Epstein – Christian Schad* in Geneva.

Although Epstein was already living in Geneva as of 1914, in the 1920s and 1930s she alternated regularly between Switzerland and Paris and participated in numerous exhibitions in both countries. Labelled a “savage” and “cubist” by the Geneva press, she preferred living in Paris, where numerous painters cultivated the Cubist stylistic vocabulary. Her work from the 1920s and 1930s consisted largely of Swiss and southern French landscapes, e.g., *Waldinneres mit Ausblick* (Forest Interior with View, 1929, fig. 12.3),¹⁵ and Parisian rooftops, and also purely abstract works. Other works included interiors as well as a series of

11 August Macke, *Kopfstudie Elisabeth Epstein* (Head Study Elisabeth Epstein) and *Bildnistudie Elisabeth Epstein* (Portrait Study Elisabeth Epstein), 1912, pencil, in Franz Marc, *Skizzenbücher*, Hs. 6381, sheets 38 and 39, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg.

12 The Berlin gallery *Der Sturm* showed the exhibition *Der Blaue Reiter, Franz Flauem, Oskar Kokoschka, Expressionisten* from March 12 to April 10, 1912.

13 The Berlin gallery *Der Sturm* showed the *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* from September 29 to December 1, 1913. Epstein, *Porträt eines jungen Mädchens* (Portrait of a Young Girl), inscribed lower right: E. Epstein, cat. no. 127 (ill.), and *Porträt*, cat. no. 128, technical data and disposition of both works unknown.

14 Elisabeth Epstein, „Einige Gedanken über Bildentstehung“ (Some Thoughts on How an Image Arises), *Der Sturm*, 3 (December 1912) 140/141: 236–237, and „Das Lächerlichsein“ (Being Ridiculous), *Der Sturm*, 4 (April 1913) 156/157: 15.

15 *Waldinneres mit Ausblick* (Forest Interior with View), 1929, oil on cardboard, 48 × 37.6 cm, inscribed upper left: E. Epstein 29, private collection, Munich.

tabletop still lifes (indoor plants, glass and ceramic vessels) in a richly colored, cubist-abstract style (fig. 12.4).¹⁶ In 1930, the then very prominent Rive Gauche Galerie Zak organized Epstein's first solo exhibition in Paris; at the same time her membership in the Paris artists' group *Les Sur/Indépendants* (1930–38), in whose presentations she was involved on several occasions, encouraged her in her cubist-constructivist approach. The year 1934 brought a reunion with the Kandinskys, who had settled in Neuilly-sur-Seine the year before.

Despite the remarkable exhibition successes that she enjoyed in the early 1930s, sales of her work were less favorable; her material and financial means during this period of her life were most likely quite modest. Epstein's son was studying medicine in Geneva, and she regularly returned there to provide him with emotional and financial support. The obtainment of citizenship in Geneva, in 1929, secured her legal status as a Swiss citizen, though at this time it was not yet possible to foresee just how important this would be for her future in Europe. As a woman of Jewish heritage, the Swiss citizenship undoubtedly protected her from the National Socialists and saved her life.

In light of the looming Second World War, Epstein gave up her studio in Paris in 1939 and subsequently remained in Geneva until her death in 1956. From the 1920s onward, her artistic activities were repeatedly interrupted by health problems and illness. In 1946, her son, by then a renowned pulmonary specialist, died of an affliction incurred while treating a patient. Epstein, being largely homebound, presumably as a consequence of foot problems, focused in her later work (1939–52) above all on tabletop still lifes in mystic, glowing, and later dusky colors, in which the contours of the depicted objects become increasingly less apparent.

The death of her son, her sorrow over the fate of Jewish relatives and friends, personal frailty, financial insecurity following many lean years and the collapse of the art market during the war—all of these were possible reasons why Epstein, becoming ever more isolated, fell into silence and even broke off contact with Sonia Delaunay for about two years. What appears to be the last letter Delaunay received from Epstein, weary in tone, appears to have been written in June 1953. Epstein writes of her physical and financial difficulties, her yearning to once more visit Sonia Delaunay in Paris, and her memories of their years together as students in Paris. Then Epstein asks her friend whether she is still working with abstraction, which, she is convinced, is “not a beginning but

16 *Stilleben Nr. 67* (Still-Life No. 67), 1929, oil on canvas, 55 × 45.7 cm, inscribed upper left: E. Epstein 29, Sammlung Würth, Inv. 3213, copyright: Museum Würth, Künzelsau and Verlag Paul Swiridoff, Künzelsau.



FIGURE 12.3 *Elisabeth Epstein, Forest Interior with View, 1929, oil on cardboard, 48 × 37.6 cm*
PRIVATE COLLECTION,
MUNICH



FIGURE 12.4 *Elisabeth Epstein, Still Life No. 67, 1929, oil on canvas, 55 × 45.7 cm*
SAMMLUNG WÜRTH,
INV. 3213, © MUSEUM
WÜRTH, KÜNZELSAU, AND
VERLAG PAUL SWIRIDOFF,
KÜNZELSAU

rather a possible goal.”¹⁷ “After a long and difficult illness,” notes the obituary, Elisabeth Epstein passed away on January 22, 1956, in Geneva. Mourned by “her family in Israel and her friends,” she was laid to rest alongside her son in the Jewish cemetery in Veyrier.¹⁸

Exhibitions, Reception, and Historical Impact

At the end of the 1930s, Epstein succeeded in retaining Geneva gallery owner Georges Moos to represent her work. Moos, a proven supporter of classic

17 “Il le faudrait car selon moi l’abstraction n’est pas un début, mais un aboutissement éventuel” Elisabeth Epstein, letter to Sonia Delaunay, Geneva, June 19 [1953?], Paris, Musée National d’ Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou.

18 “La famille en Israel et les amis ont le grand chagrin de faire part du décès de Madame Elisabeth EPSTEIN-HEFTER, peintre, survenu le 22 janvier après une longue et pénible maladie. L’ensevelissement aura lieu au cimetière israélite de Veyrier, le mardi 24 janvier à 11 h1/4.” “Obituary for Madame Elisabeth Epstein-Hefter,” *La Tribune de Genève* (Geneva Tribune), January 23, 1956.

modernism, included Epstein's work during the period from 1940 to 1946 in several group exhibitions and organized solo exhibitions for her in 1944 and 1946. The critical response to these exhibitions was overwhelmingly positive; critics emphasized that Epstein had managed to translate the cubist use of form she had learned in Paris into her own individual artistic vocabulary and that her understanding of how to deal with light and volume was especially masterful. Among Epstein's close circle of friends in Geneva was the publisher Michel Slatkine.¹⁹ Epstein appointed him as trustee of her personal estate and the art dealer Georges Moos as trustee of her body of artistic work. Epstein bequeathed the remaining artworks in her possession to her sister, the painter Fanny Hefter, who was living in Israel in June 1956. In 1964, eight years after Epstein's death, Hefter convinced the art dealer Eleonore (Nora) Wilenska, who owned the Nora Art Gallery in Jerusalem, to hold the first solo exhibition of Epstein's work in Israel. After Wilenska's death in 1980, her daughter and successor Dina Hanoach campaigned for artistic recognition in Israel not only for Epstein but also her sister Fanny Hefter. A double exhibition, Epstein-Hefter, in 1983, was followed by a solo exhibition of Epstein's work in September 1986.²⁰ Hanoach continued to exhibit works by Epstein in numerous group exhibitions until 1992.

Today Epstein's body of work from the middle and later years is largely to be found in the Galleria Sacchetti, in Ascona; the Nora Gallery, in Jerusalem; in various European, Israeli and American private collections; and also the Geneva Musée d'Art et d'Histoire and in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, in the Centre Pompidou. In 1989, the Galleria Sacchetti organized an Epstein exhibition, followed by an exhibition organized by the Kunstverein Wolfsburg in 1990 for which the exhibition catalogue was produced by Bernd Fäthke.²¹ The Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, in Ascona, dedicated its 1997 double exhibition to the two fellow champions of the expressionistic Moderne: *Marianne von Werefkin—Elisabeth I. Epstein*.²²

19 "Je crois d'autre part savoir que Madame Epstein ne laissait rien de valeur à sa mort, et que mon père s'était chargé de liquider les quelques biens mobiliers de l'appartement." Michel-E. Slatkine, letter to Verena von Dellingshausen, Geneva, November 6, 2006, Verena von Dellingshausen, Bad Honnef.

20 *Elisabeth Epstein—Fanny Hefter*, Jerusalem: Nora Art Gallery, Ben Maimon Avenue 9, September 3—October 1, 1983.

21 Fäthke, *Elisabeth I. Epstein*, catalogue to the exhibition of same name at the Galleria Sacchetti, Ascona, July 30 to August 20, 1989 and Kunstverein Wolfsburg, May 6 to June 17, 1990.

22 *Duedonnenel movimento, „Der Blaue Reiter“—Marianne von Werefkin (1860–1938)—Elisabeth I. Epstein (1879–1956)*, Ascona: Museo comunale d'arte moderna, from March 16, 1997.

Epstein's work and her role in introducing Delaunay to the Munich artists' group are more or less well documented in almost all publications on the *Blaue Reiter*. In *Blaue Reiter* exhibitions to date, Epstein has always been represented, even if merely as a peripheral figure, and her affiliation with the Munich art scene at the turn of the century, particularly with the Munich group associated with Marianne Werefkin, was the subject of a 2014 exhibition in Bietigheim-Bissingen and then in Bremen, which was accompanied by the international conference *Grenzüberschreitungen: Marianne Werefkin und die kosmopolitischen Künstlerinnen in ihrem Umfeld*.²³ Munich's attraction for numerous artists around 1900, including Epstein, was explored by the Münchner Stadtmuseum in an exhibition in 2014/15.²⁴ The initial scholarly and journalistic re-appraisal of Epstein's work, as well as her inclusion in retrospective *Der Blaue Reiter* and *Der Sturm* exhibitions, is ultimately the result of Epstein's affiliation with the Munich and Berlin avant-garde on the eve of the First World War—an affiliation in need of further research and exhibitions.

23 *Marianne Werefkin. Vom Blauen Reiter zum Großen Bären* (Marianne Werefkin: From the Blue Rider to the Great Bear), Bietigheim-Bissingen: Städtische Galerie, April 12 to July 6, 2014 and Bremen: Paula Modersohn-Becker Museum, July 20 to October 6, 2014.

24 *Ab nach München! Künstlerinnen um 1900* (Off to Munich. Women Artists Around 1900), Munich: Stadtmuseum, September 12, 2014 to February 8, 2015.

The Artist Elena Luksch-Makowsky: Between St. Petersburg, Munich, Vienna, and Hamburg

Simone Ewald

Abstract

As the daughter of the famous Russian Salon painter Konstantin Makovsky, Elena Luksch-Makowsky received a thorough artistic education in St. Petersburg, Munich, and Vienna; she successfully exhibited with the Vienna Secession and worked for the Vienna Workshops between 1900 and 1908. Her further development as an artist, however, was limited by her three pregnancies, the family's move to Hamburg, her divorce, and the subsequent burden of having to raise the children on her own. The essay explores the historical conditions, cultural limitations, and personal reasons for the unfulfilled artistic potential of Elena Luksch-Makowsky.

Whenever the painter and sculptor Elena Luksch-Makowsky is mentioned in the literature or represented in a museum exhibition, it is almost always in the context of the Vienna Secession and the *Wiener Werkstätte* (Vienna Workshops) with whom she was involved from 1900 until around 1908. This period of less than a decade, on which art historians usually focus, is extremely narrow given that the artist, born in 1878, pursued an active career up until her death at the age of 89. As the Austrian art historian Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber has noted, Elena Luksch-Makowsky “as an artist, so to speak, [was] embalmed in her own lifetime.”¹ I wish to illuminate some aspects of her biography and work that led to this assessment.

Childhood and Youth in St. Petersburg

Elena Konstantinovna Makovskaya was born in 1878 into an aristocratic family of artists. In her posthumously published memoir, she describes her childhood

1 “als Künstlerin gleichsam zu Lebzeiten schon einbalsamiert” Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich 1897–1938. Malerei, Plastik, Architektur* (Women artists in Austria 1897–1938: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture) (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 126.

with enthusiasm: “I was cradled in my father’s renown and my mother’s beauty; in the background were many friends, visitors, and admirers of my fathers’ art....”² Like her uncle Vladimir, her father, Konstantin Makovsky, was a member of the *Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok* (Society of Travelling Art Exhibitions), the so-called Wanderers, which strove to capture in a realistic style images of everyday Russian life and history, as well as scenes from mythology and Russian fairy tales. The colorful, opulent works of her father attracted influential clients, including the imperial tsar’s family, making him one of the most sought after and influential artists of his time. In the upper-class home of the Makovskys, in a well-to-do St. Petersburg neighborhood, a distinguished group of visitors consisting of artists and “many socially prominent and aristocratic figures,”³ among them Leo Tolstoy, regularly met. The young mother, Julia Makovsky, with her “instinct for the social graces, interest in people, her beauty, discretion, and taste”⁴ assumed the role of hostess and lady of the house. Elena’s upbringing was likewise a preparation for her future role as wife and woman of the house. Her talents in drawing and painting, however, did not go unnoticed by her father. He provided attentive encouragement with praise, suggestions, corrections, and gifts of books. Even so, it was unlikely that her parents saw in her the makings of a future professional artist. For the young Elena, however, there was no question: “I decided very early on to become an artist and fully believed in myself,”⁵ she remembered later. In order to ease marital tensions, which led to the parent’s divorce in 1892, her mother set off in 1889 with the children on extended travels in Europe. Their four years of travel led them to Bad Kissingen, Venice, Florence, Lausanne, and Nice, among other places: “This contact with various foreign guests greatly expanded my perspective and enabled a certain freedom in my ability to converse and chat with them in their language.”⁶ After the return to St. Petersburg, she received instruction from the Society for the Advancement of the Fine Arts and began preliminary studies in 1895 in the private studio

2 “Mein Wiegenlied war die Berühmtheit meines Vaters und die Schönheit meiner Mutter, im Hintergrund viele Freunde, Besucher, Verehrer der Kunst meines Vaters [...]” Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Kindheits—und Jugenderinnerungen 1878–1900* (Memories of childhood and youth 1878–1900) (Hamburg: Hower, 1989), 5. After her death, her memoirs were translated by her son Peter and after his death published by his daughter Maria Luksch.

3 “viele gesellschaftliche und adelige Persönlichkeiten” *Ibid.*, 22.

4 “Gesellschaftsgefühl, Interesse für Menschen, mit ihrer Schönheit, ihrem Takt und Geschmack” *Ibid.*, 23.

5 “Ich habe mich sehr früh entschlossen, Künstlerin zu werden und glaubte an mich” *Ibid.*, 26.

6 “Diese Berührung mit verschiedenen ausländischen Gästen erweiterte den Blickwinkel, vermittelte eine gewisse Freiheit in der Fähigkeit, mit ihnen in ihrer Sprache zu sprechen und zu plaudern.” *Ibid.*, 69.

of Ilya Repin (1844–1930), who at the time was at the zenith of his success. A year later Repin accepted the young eighteen-year-old into his master class at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. This as such was not so unusual, as women had been permitted as students in the academy since 1893. Additionally, she attended a sculpture class taught by Vladimir Beklemishev, who likewise offered her access to his studio. Repin, whom she “naturally and immeasurably”⁷ admired, nevertheless remained the central figure in her education. In 1898, Makovskaya set off alone—as her role model Repin himself once did—on a voyage on the Volga. In her sketchbooks, she recorded the impressions she gained along the so-called Golden Route:

Tirelessly I painted in my album, at times the riverbank, then the figures at the stations, barge haulers with their sunburned faces, the ancient Russian; then I set down the people on the deck and captured swiftly but with care their appearance, all shades of the complexion, the picturesque nature of the people, the shine of the patchwork clothing and the expressiveness of the faces.⁸

In addition to her academic training, this penchant for the rural character of Russia, which she recorded with pencil and brush on her numerous journeys, served as a formative artistic experience.

At one of the regularly scheduled Academy exhibitions, Makovskaya’s work came to the attention of Johann von Bloch, railroad pioneer in Russia, pacifist, and patron of the arts; he offered her a stipend for travel abroad.⁹ She chose Munich, because, as she explained later: “At the time several students from the Academy left for Munich, having heard stories of Frau Werefkina, of Grabar, of Kandinsky and Jawlensky, who were there experimenting with colorful effects.”¹⁰

7 “natürlich und grenzenlos” Ibid., 95.

8 “Unermüdlich malte ich ins Album, mal die Ufer, mal die Figuren an den Stationen, Hakenmänner mit ihren sonnenverbrannten Gesichtern, das uralte Russische; dann setzte ich an Deck die Menschen fest und ergriff schnell, aber durchdacht, ihre Erscheinung, scharf und aufmerksam alle Stufen des Kolorits erfassend, das Malerische des Volkes, das Glänzen der Kleiderflicken und die Ausdruckskraft der Gesichter.” Ibid., 109.

9 He also commissioned her to design a frieze, *Über die Notwendigkeit des Friedens und die Unmöglichkeit künftiger Kriege* [On the necessity of peace and the impossibility of future wars], to be shown at the Paris world exposition in 1900. Due to political bickering, however, it was never exhibited, and the disposition of the work is unknown. Ibid., 120–121.

10 “Zu dieser Zeit fuhren einige Schüler der Akademie nach München, erzählten von Frau Werefkina, von Grabar, von Kandinsky und Jawlensky, die dort experimentierten, mit farbenprächtigen Effekten.” Ibid., 113.

Stops in Munich and Deutenhofen

Like the Russian artists preceding her, Makovskaya found her way to Anton Ažbe's school upon her arrival in the Bavarian art metropolis. As to whether there was any interaction or acquaintance with those in Werefkin's circle, we can only speculate. The works from this period, however, show no indication of any influence from the artists associated with Werefkin. Ažbe's influence on his art student must likewise have been limited, as Makovskaya soon departed from Munich for a studio in Schloss Deutenhofen (fig. 13.1). Here, in the vicinity of Dachau, the professional sculptor Mathias Gasteiger offered instruction and studio space. Most clearly to be seen in the works from this period is the influence of the Dachau artists' colony (Neu-Dachau), particularly Ludwig Dills and Adolf Hölzel.¹¹



FIGURE 13.1 *Elena Makowsky in her Studio in Deutenhofen, 1898/99, anonymous photographer*
PRIVATE COLLECTION

11 See Athina Chadzis, "Die Malerin und Bildhauerin Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878–1976). Biographie und Werkbeschreibung" (The woman painter and sculptor Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878–1976): Biography and oeuvre), PhD thesis Hamburg University, 2000, 40–45. URL: <http://ediss.sub.uni-hamburg.de/volltexte/2000/893/> (accessed January 18, 2015) Chadzis's dissertation is the first work to offer a detailed overview of the artist's entire body of work.

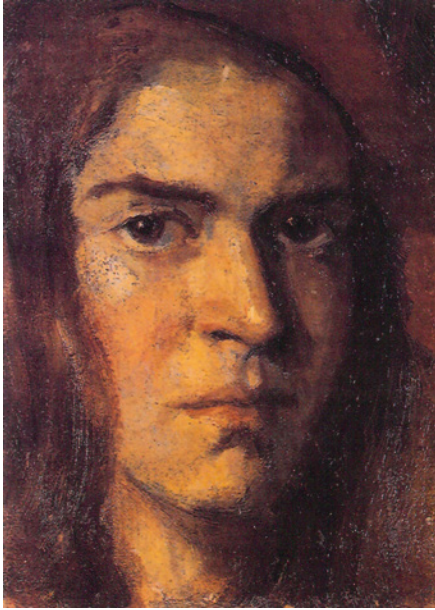


FIGURE 13.2
*Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Self-Portrait with
 Red Beret, 1898, oil on canvas, 25.2 × 18.8 cm*
 PRIVATE COLLECTION

A photograph from 1898/99 shows Elena Makovskaya in her Deutenhof studio as she typically appeared at the time: She wore her full red hair loose, with a red beret (fig. 13.2). This tomboyish self-portrayal, which she also captured in a self-portrait from 1898,¹² can be interpreted as an attempt to lead a life of “male” freedom. In the photograph, it is possible to identify works from the Dachau period around 1898/99, for example, the painting *Der Schlachter* (The Butcher)¹³ and the sculpture *Die Badende* (The Female Bather).¹⁴ A work by another artist can also be seen: *Purzelbaum* (Somersault),¹⁵ by Richard Luksch, an Austrian painter and sculptor whom she met in Deutenhofen and, after much consideration and inner conflict, married in June 1900.

Her hesitation was due, in part, to her close bond with her family, her circle of friends, and her intimate acquaintance with the Russian culture, which marriage would have meant giving up. At the same time, she was concerned

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- 12 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Selbstporträt mit rotem Barrett* (Self-portrait with red baret), 1898, oil on canvas, 25.2 × 18.8 cm, private collection.
- 13 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Der Schlachter* (The Butcher), c. 1898, medium und dimensions unknown, disposition unknown. Reproduced in Chadzis, *Die Malerin und Bildhauerin Elena Luksch-Makowsky*, fig. 11.
- 14 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Die Badende* (Female Bather), medium und dimensions unknown, disposition unknown.
- 15 Richard Luksch, *Purzelbaum* (Somersault), c. 1898, plaster, height c. 30 cm, disposition unknown.

that in the role of married woman she would lose her independence as an artist. There remains an extensive correspondence in French in which she repeatedly returns to her misgivings with respect to Richard Luksch. In the end, she obtains from her future husband the written promise that after the wedding she would be able to visit Russia at any time—with or without his approval—and that the two of them would continue to work as independent artists of equal standing.¹⁶

Initial Successes in Vienna

Shortly after their marriage the couple moved to Vienna. The same year, Richard Luksch became a member of the *Vereinigung der bildenden Künstler Österreichs*, the so-called Vienna Secession. The cosmopolitan milieu of the Secessionists offered Elena, who spoke fluent German, French, and English, an extraordinary environment: “They all live from the atmosphere of fellowship in which they work and in which they mutually support and enhance one another.”¹⁷ Elena Luksch-Makowsky regularly took part in their exhibitions until the split in 1905 and was the only female artist with her own Vienna Secession monogram—though as a woman an official membership with voting rights remained off limits. Admittance to this exclusive circle of artists may have been facilitated in part by her relationship with Richard Luksch; her artistic abilities, however, were impressive, and unlike many western European women artists, her artistic training and education extraordinarily solid and well-rounded. This allowed her to participate—rather an exception for the time—and interact on an equal footing with male colleagues such as Kolo-man Moser and Josef Hoffmann. That artists such as these duly recognized and acknowledged her artistic potential can be seen in the placement of her work in Vienna Secession exhibitions. Her best-known paintings, *Ver Sacrum* (Sacred Spring, fig. 13.3),¹⁸ a symbolist self-portrait with her son Peter (b. 1901),

16 Letter to Richard Luksch, January 28, 1900, Research Centre for East European Studies, Bremen University, Archive, FSO 01-218.

17 “Sie alle leben von der Atmosphäre der Gemeinschaft, in der sie arbeiten und in der sie sich gegenseitig tragen und steigern.” Hans H. Hofstätter, *Geschichte der europäischen Jugendstilmalerei. Ein Entwurf* (History of European Art Nouveau Painting: A Concept) (Cologne: DuMont, 1974), 229.

18 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Ver Sacrum*, 1901, oil on canvas, 94.5 × 52 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna.

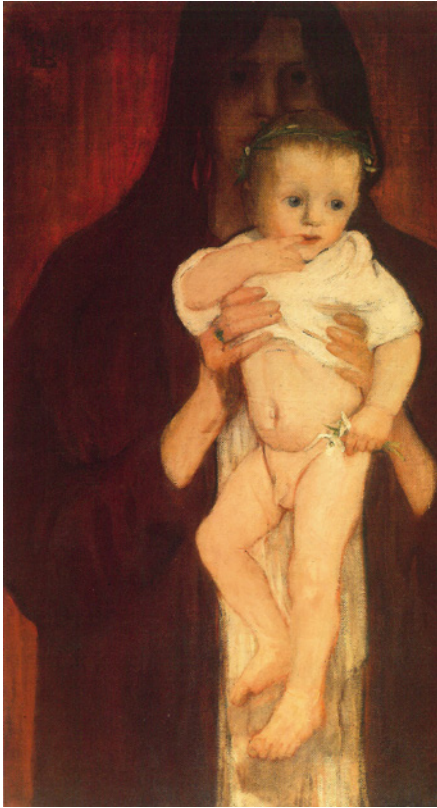


FIGURE 13.3 *Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Ver Sacrum, 1901, oil on canvas, 94.5 × 52 cm*
ÖSTERREICHISCHE GALERIE
BELVEDERE, VIENNA



FIGURE 13.4 *Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Adolescentia, 1903, oil on canvas, 172 × 79 cm*
ÖSTERREICHISCHE
GALERIE BELVEDERE,
VIENNA

and the female adolescent nude *Adolescentia* (Youth, fig. 13.4)¹⁹ were central works in the 1902 and 1903 exhibitions respectively. The designing of an entire issue of the Secession journal *Ver Sacrum* further affirmed her equal stature in the group.²⁰

I would like to single out Luksch-Makowsky's contribution to the notable fourteenth exhibition of the Vienna Secession of 1902, the so-called Beethoven

19 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Adolescentia*, 1903, oil on canvas, 172 × 79 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna.

20 *Ver Sacrum, Mittheilungen der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs* (Ver Sacrum: Memorandums of the Association of Fine Artists in Austria), 6 (1903) 8.

exhibition. This was the highpoint of Josef Hoffman's *Raumkunst* (Art Space) explorations, which in their artistic approach to the design and layout of the exhibition spaces aspired to the ideals of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The critic Joseph August Lux described in 1902 the section of the exhibition in which Luksch-Makowsky was involved as follows:

In numerous inlays and decorative panels that have been set into the walls, the artists have sought after new techniques and applications of materials and initiated most consistently new and fruitful developments. An abundance of beauty and charm, of inventive technical combinations and new decorative possibilities, is displayed on this wall.²¹

Luksch-Makowsky was represented here by, among other works, two inlaid decorative panels: *Tod und Zeit* (Death and Time, fig. 13.5) and *Sadkos Brautschau* (Sadko's Viewing of the Brides). The works—as was the case for the panels designed by the other artists—were demolished after the exhibition closed, but with the help of photographs it is possible to reconstruct their appearance.²² In both works, the artist was experimenting with new combinations of materials: *Tod und Zeit* consisted of a background of white plaster painted with silicate mineral colors and inlaid with hammered copper; in the case of *Sadkos Brautschau*, the background is the same, but this time painted with casein color; the detailing consisted of embellishments of metal inlay. The diversity of materials found in Max Klinger's sculpture of Beethoven, which stood at the center of the exhibition, was echoed in many of the wall pieces by the artists, including those of Luksch-Makowsky. As can be seen in her work *Sadkos Brautschau*, she had fully absorbed the influences of the Vienna Secession, but without simply copying: The image is constructed in layers; the filigreed, sweeping lines add structure, but it is the lithe forms of the female figures that lend the composition its elegant rhythm. The work is a clever interplay of

21 "In zahlreichen Füllungen und Schmuckplatten, die in die Wände eingelassen sind, haben die Künstler neue Techniken und Material-Verwendungen gesucht und fast durchwegs neue fruchtbare Entwicklungen angebahnt. Ein Reichtum von Schönheit und Anmut, von Erfindung in technischen Kombinationen und neuen Dekorationsmöglichkeiten ist über diese Wände verbreitet." Joseph August Lux, "Klingers Beethoven und die moderne Raum-Kunst" (Klinger's Beethoven and modern interior art), in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration. Illustr. Monatshefte für moderne Malerei, Plastik, Architektur, Wohnungskunst u. künstlerisches Frauen-Arbeiten* (German Art and Decoration: Illustrated Monthly Booklets for Modern Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Design and Artistic Women Work), 10 (1902): 480.

22 Ibid., 505 and 507.



FIGURE 13.5 *Elena Luksch-Makowsky, Death and Time, 1902, white plaster, silicate mineral colors, copper, size unknown, destroyed*

foreground and background that divides the surface diagonally; we peer, as it were, over Sadko's shoulder at the parade of brides. The subject recalls a Russian legend in which the traveling merchant Sadko is invited by the Sea King to the sea floor to select the most beautiful woman of all time and places. Julie M. Johnson sees in *Sadkos Brautschau* a clever intellectual, artistic response to the Viennese fascination with nymphs, mermaids, and other sea creatures that can be found, for example, throughout the works of Arnold Böcklin.²³ But above all, the choice of motif clearly demonstrates that the Russian pictorial and oral tradition was a central point of reference for the artist. A comparison with Ilya Repin's opulent painting *Sadko v Podvodnom tsarstve* (Sadko in the Realm of the Sea King)²⁴ elucidates the specific nature of Luksch-Makowsky's

23 See Julie M. Johnson, *The Memory Factory: The Forgotten Women Artists in Vienna 1900* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2012), 81.

24 Ilya Repin: *Sadko v Podvodnom tsarstve* (Sadko in the Realm of the Sea King), 1876, oil on canvas, 322.5 × 230 cm, State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

art: She took up typical Russian motifs already introduced by the *peredvizhnik* and allowed them to coalesce into a new artistic entity by means of her skillful employment of the visual language of the *Jugendstil*. This approach clearly places her among the artists associated with the publication founded by Sergei Diaghilev and artistic group of the same name, *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art). The stylistically diverse group of artists gathered around *Mir iskusstva* was united by their repudiation of the rigid rules of academic painting and didactic realism of the preceding generation of painters of the *peredvizhnik*. Their shared points of reference were a neo-romantic cult devoted to the beauty of “Old Russia,” a focus on arts and crafts, and a preference for ornamental and stylized forms in the Western style. Luksch-Makowsky knew the so-called *miriskusniki*, supporters of *Mir iskusstva* such as Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Konstantin Somov, Evgeny Lancere, Ivan Bilibin, or Igor Grabar, from St. Petersburg: “That only began, but I followed everything, whenever I travelled home from abroad...”²⁵ She met Grabar again in Munich in Ažbe’s school, and he arranged for her participation in 1902 in the fourth exhibition of the journal *Mir isskustva*.

The influence that Russian art at the turn of the century, particularly the work of the group associated with *Mir iskusstva*, had on Luksch-Makowsky and her role in the artists’ group has not yet been extensively explored and is a topic that promises new insights and would contribute to a fuller assessment and appreciation of the artist’s oeuvre. Luksch-Makowsky’s correspondence with her fellow Russian artists, including Diaghilev and Grabar, was acquired by the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen at the end of 2013 and is awaiting an extensive investigation.

The Move to Hamburg

“Since [...] one cannot entertain solely with reports of automobile accidents,” wrote the Vienna art critic Ludwig Hevesi in *Sommerloch* in 1907, “this time, it is another sort of misfortune, recently reported, which concerns us.”²⁶ He

25 “All das begann erst, aber ich verfolgte alles, immer wenn ich aus dem Ausland in meine Heimat fuhr [...]” Luksch-Makowsky, *Kindheits—und Jugenderinnerungen 1878–1900*, 124.

26 “Da man (...) nicht ausschließlich mit Automobilunfällen unterhalten kann”, schreibt der Wiener Kunstkritiker Ludwig Hevesi im *Sommerloch* 1907, “sei diesmal ein anderes Unglück verkündet, das uns kürzlich in aller Stille betroffen hat.” Ludwig Hevesi and Otto Breicha, *Altkunst—Neukunst. Wien 1894–1908* (Old Art—New Art: Vienna 1894–1908) (Vienna: Konegen, 1909), 236.

was referring to Richard Luksch's appointment as professor at the *Hamburger Kunstgewerbeschule* [School of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg]. This came as a surprise to many, as Richard Luksch was considered to be one of the most important sculptors at the *Wiener Werkstätte*. At the same time, his wife was very much in demand there as an artist, producing painted fans and cabinets, graphic works, and silver and metal reliefs. Both were involved in the design and furnishing of Josef Hoffmann's Stoclet Palace in Brussels, viewed by many as the architectural pinnacle of the *Wiener Werkstätte*. A decisive factor in the decision to accept the position in the Hanseatic city of Hamburg was certainly the prospect of a steady income for the family of four. After their arrival in Hamburg, they continued their relationships with Vienna, particularly with the workshops, which still offered their work. The couple participated in the *Kunstschau Wien 1908*, the "never-to-be-surpassed realization"²⁷ of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in modern art history. Elena Luksch-Makowsky exhibited her illustrations for the book *Deutsche Schwänke* (German Farces), which had been published in 1906,²⁸ and also her illustrations for Rabelais' *Gargantua e Pantagruel*, which had been executed in Hamburg and demonstrate her preference for the grotesque; her efforts to find a publisher for these, however, were less successful.²⁹ She enjoyed greater success with her *Russischen Sprichwörter* (Russian Proverbs, 1910), which were marketed by the *Wiener Werkstätte* as a series of postcards. The series is in the woodcut tradition of the Russian *lubok* folk art and bears witness to a significant transformation in style: The filigree lines of Vienna have been considerably simplified and strengthened; in the same manner the colors have become stronger and more vibrant.

In addition to her connections to Vienna, she continued to maintain her close ties to St. Petersburg by means of travel, exhibitions, and letters and made use of the contacts that her brother Sergei, as an influential "art manager" and publisher of the journal *Apollon*, was able to offer. In his role as professor at the school of arts and crafts, Richard Luksch was able to rather quickly integrate himself into Hamburg's society and art circles, but this was much more difficult for his wife. The harbor city in northern Germany offered her nothing like the stimulating atmosphere and opportunities for artistic cooperation that she

27 "als niemals übertroffene Inszenierung" Agnes Hullein-Arco, in Agnes Hullein-Arco and Alfred Weidinger, eds., *Gustav Klimt und die Kunstschau 1908* (Gustav Klimt and the Art Show 1908), exh. cat. (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere; Munich: Prestel, 2008), 13.

28 Leonhart Frischlin, *Deutsche Schwänke. 79 kurzweilig Schwenck und Fatzbossen* (German Farces: 79 Amusing Movements and Burlesques) (Leipzig: Zeitler, 1906).

29 The illustrations are currently located in the print room of the Kunsthalle Hamburg.

had found in Vienna and St. Petersburg. In the winter of 1910/11, she began work on *Frauenschicksal* (Woman's Fate, fig. 13.6),³⁰ a white faience figure group. The work depicts a female figure at whose feet three children seek refuge—“attentive children's faces, not *putti*—refined, alert little artist's souls,”³¹ as she wrote. The woman, deep in thought, grasps absentmindedly at her hair; on her shoulder is a cuckoo, “whose call according to folklore is that of a woman in mourning, full of yearning,”³² she explained in her notes. “Unsettling despite a harmonious, formal structure,” Luksch-Makowsky further explained. “Round about her head [of the figure of the woman] a beating of wings and rustling like the movement of thought clouds.”³³ *Frauenschicksal* was the culmination of the artist's long and very personal confrontation with the relationship between life as an artist and the role of motherhood. This sculpture, she felt,



FIGURE 13.6

Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Woman's Fate*, 1911, faience, glazed, 202 × 105 × 105 cm
KUNSTHALLE HAMBURG (ON LOAN)

- 30 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Frauenschicksal* (Fate of a woman), 1911, faience, glazed, 202 × 105 × 105 cm, Kunsthalle Hamburg (loan). The work was erected in a city park in Hamburg in 1927; it was placed in storage at the Kunsthalle Hamburg in the 1970s.
- 31 “aufhorchende Kindergestalten, keine Putten—verfeinerte, wache Künstlerseelchen” Luksch-Makowsky, cited in Chadzis, *Die Malerin und Bildhauerin Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878–1976)*, 207.
- 32 “dessen Ruf nach Volksglauben der einer trauernden, einer sehnsüchtigen Frau sein soll,” *ibid.*, 209.
- 33 “Um ihren Kopf [also der Mittelfigur, d. Verf.] ein Flügelschlagen und Rauschen wie ziehende Gedankenwolken.” *Ibid.*, 207.

represented her greatest masterpiece—an opinion likewise noted in the art history books, which then report no further.

But what became of her professional career as an artist? “Life would interfere...”³⁴ the artist and sculptor feared early on, and she was right: Her divorce from Richard Luksch, in 1921, left her solely responsible for her three young sons, making it impossible for her to fully concentrate on her artistic work. Athina Chadzis identified three substantial spheres of activity in her life in the subsequent years:

First, the engagement with Russian culture; her efforts now were first and foremost concerned with preserving the cultural and religious customs then being suppressed by the Bolsheviks. In the work of this period one can furthermore observe a tendency to nostalgic reworking of older sketches and earlier themes. Another emphasis was on the effort to acquire public commissions, including advertising design work.³⁵

Her work situation became even more precarious with the assumption of power by the National Socialists. In 1934 Elena Luksch-Makowsky joined the *Reichskammer der Bildenden Künste* (Reich Chamber of the Fine Arts), but the hoped-for increases in public commissions and assignments did not come.³⁶ Portraits completed during this period are difficult to find today, or are lost, as is the case with *Porträt Walter Niemann im Chilehaus* (Portrait of Walter Niemann in Chile House, 1941),³⁷ in which she turns to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity). Even so, Luksch-Makowsky remained largely true to her

34 “Das Leben würde stören...,” *ibid.*, 56.

35 “Einmal ist es die Beschäftigung mit der russischen Kultur, und zwar richtete sich ihr Streben jetzt vor allem danach, die nun von den Bolschewisten unterdrückten kulturellen und religiösen Bräuche zu pflegen. Außerdem ist in den Arbeiten dieser Periode ein Hang zu nostalgischer Aufarbeitung alter Skizzen und Bearbeitung früherer Themen zu beobachten. Ein anderer Schwerpunkt wurde das Bestreben, öffentliche Aufträge zu erhalten, auch Entwürfe für Werbeschriften sind hierzu zu zählen.” *Ibid.*, 244.

36 The question of whether the apparently unproblematic admittance of the Russian artist to the organization can be explained by her aristocratic background must remain unanswered. Both the membership card and an undated copy of her letter that would have accompanied her application form are located today in the Research Centre for East European Studies at Bremen University, Archive, FSO 01-218.

37 Elena Luksch-Makowsky, *Porträt Walter Niemann im Chilehaus* (Portrait Walter Niemann at the Chile House), 1941, medium and dimensions unknown, disposition unknown, reproduced in Chadzis, *Die Malerin und Bildhauerin Elena Luksch-Makowsky (1878–1976)*, fig. 100.

Jugendstil-influenced visual imagery, a stylistic direction then no longer in accord with the prevailing taste. After the Second World War, she was largely involved with religious icons and decoration for the Russian Orthodox congregation in Hamburg.

An Artist between Worlds?

Given the biographical details of Elena Luksch-Makowsky's life, the subtitle of my lecture—*Between St. Petersburg, Munich, Vienna, and Hamburg*—must be viewed somewhat euphemistically. It really should have been: From St. Petersburg to Munich, Vienna, and last stop, Hamburg. Initially, it was the First World War that prevented travel to Russia; then came the Russian Revolution, in 1917, during which time such visits to her homeland became impossible. This separation from family, friends, and the Russian culture, Luksch-Makowsky experienced as a personal, but also an artistic tragedy, as it deprived her of her sources of inspiration:

In spite of the successes, of personal and familial good fortune and the raising of three sons, my entire life was marked by sorrow over the loss of homeland, the feeling of displacement and loss of all aspects of artistic inspiration and tradition. Many further pages of my “defense” will be filled with stories of these inner sorrows—why I have not accomplished all for which I was predestined.³⁸

In light of her excellent training and education and brilliant entrance into the world of art, it is indeed unfortunate that Elena Luksch-Makowsky's artistic career ended before she could fully realize it. The three pregnancies, the move to Hamburg, the limited financial means, and the burden of her exile—all of these were certainly reasons why she was unable to fully achieve her artistic potential (fig. 13.7). “A woman's fate, an artist's life. Our attention, however, is particularly on those works produced between 1900 and 1908. That is a tenth of

38 “Ungeachtet der Erfolge, des persönlichen und familiären Glücks und der Erziehung dreier Söhne, war das ganze Leben gezeichnet von Trauer über den Verlust der Heimat, von dem Gefühl der Vertreibung und des Verlustes aller Eindrücke künstlerischen und volkstümlichen Charakters. Von der Erzählung von diesen inneren Leiden werden viele weitere Seiten meiner ‚Rechtfertigung‘ gefüllt sein—warum ich nicht alles ausgeführt habe, was mir vorbestimmt war.” Luksch-Makowsky, *Kindheits—und Jugenderinnerungen 1878–1900*, 79.



FIGURE 13.7
*Elena Luksch-Makowsky with sons
 Peter and Andreas, 1907, photograph by
 Rudolf Dührkoop*
 MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE,
 HAMBURG

her life, years of motivation, of exertion, and of success,”³⁹ concluded Helmut R. Leppien. Such a summary, however, does not do justice to the sum of her creative energies. Certainly the later works no longer demonstrate the artistic strength of the Vienna and early Hamburg years—but to dismiss the artist as “embalmed already during her lifetime” would appear to be a harsh judgment in light of her lifelong artistic activities. New research focusing, for example, on an exploration of the artist’s strong ties to the Russian *Stil Modern* and the *Mir iskusstva* would offer intriguing insights into this artist whose work too often has been considered solely in the context of the Vienna *Jugendstil*, a movement whose own cyclical evaluation in the art world has in recent decades unfortunately largely determined the presence or absence of the multifaceted work of Elena Luksch-Makowsky in museums and publications.

39 “Ein Frauenschicksal, ein Künstlerleben. Unsere Aufmerksamkeit jedoch gilt besonders jenen Werken, die in den Jahren 1900 bis 1908 entstanden sind. Das ist ein Zehntel ihres Lebens, Jahre der Anregung, der Anspannung und des Gelingens.” Helmut R. Leppien, “Elena Luksch-Makowsky. Zwischen Bilderbogen und Stilkunst” (Elena Luksch-Makowsky: Between *Bilderbogen* and *Stilkunst*), in Joachim Heusinger von Waldegg and Helmut Leppien, *Richard Luksch / Elena Luksch-Makowsky*, Hamburger Künstlermonographien, vol. 10 (Hamburg: Hans Christians, 1979), 22.

PART 4

*The Women Artists in Marianne Werefkin's
Larger Cultural Circle*



Natalia Goncharova: Artistic Innovator and Inspiring Muse

Olga Furman

Abstract

Placing Russian artist Natalia Goncharova at the crossroads of inspiring muse and artistic innovator, this essay highlights the exceptional role of Natalia Goncharova in Russian avant-garde art. Goncharova connected Russian modernism to its native sources in folk art and icon painting, thus promoting a new aesthetic positioned between East and West. The uniqueness of Goncharova's work lies in its ability to remain faithful to the visual world and to nature and, at the same time, be modern and up-to-date. Particular focus is on the artist's understanding of Russia's national self-determination in the East-West coordinate system and her reflection of the principles of beauty, unity, and diversity in art.

It is difficult to find another female artist in Russian art of the twentieth century who received the sort of impassioned, florid reviews that Natalia Goncharova did: A “strong and fine artist,” “battle-woman of Russian Futurism,” “Scythian priestess,” and “anti-artist”¹—these are just some of the labels attached to her. Sergei Diaghilev called Goncharova a leading figure among the male-dominated circle of artists, saying that “all the youth of Moscow and St. Petersburg bow down to Goncharova.”² The strong public sentiments and lofty clichés were in part an effort to permanently fix the artist's changing image, but Goncharova always managed to sidestep such categorical expressions of admiration and to metamorphose into something else as her art continued to grow and change.

1 See Jane A. Sharp, *Russian Modernism between East and West. Natal'ia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 221–238.

2 “Тончаровой нынче кланяется вся московская и петербургская молодежь.” Marina Tsvetaeva, “Natalia Goncharova. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo” (Natalia Goncharova. Life and Work), in *Natalia Goncharova. Mikhail Larionov. Vosponinaniya sovremennikov* (Natalia Goncharova. MiMemories of Contemporaries), ed. Georgy F. Kovalenko (Moscow: Galart, 1995), 64.

Goncharova's artistic career in Russia reached its highpoint in 1913, the year when the first monograph on her and Mikhail Larionov was published, written by their artist friend Ilya Zdanevich (under the pseudonym Eli Eganburi).³ This same year, Goncharova took part in public debates, wore Futurist make-up, appeared in a film, illustrated Futurist books, worked on décor, drew wallpaper and clothes sketches, was awarded a contract for church murals and stained glass, and more; however, the most important event of the year for Goncharova was her solo exhibition of more than 750 works of art from the period 1900–13.⁴ At such a time, when the opportunities for women artists graduating from art school were much more limited than those of their fellow male students, the case of Goncharova's retrospective exhibition is remarkable. Technically, this was not Goncharova's first exhibit, but this was the exhibition that established her reputation for many years to come. This article addresses several aspects of Goncharova's innovative work from the 1913 exhibition that saw a wide public resonance and opened new perspectives for Russian art of the period.

In Front of the World: Self-Portrait

At the beginning of her career, Goncharova made the following admission to Larionov: "I know very well that I am your creation and that without you nothing would have been."⁵ There was some basis in these words. Larionov met Goncharova while still a student in the Sculpture Department of the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture (*Moskovskoye uchilishche zhivopisi, vayaniya i zodchestva*) in 1901–04. Larionov saw in his future partner the gift of a painter and convinced her to take up the medium: "You have eyes for color, but you are bothering with form. Realize what your eyes are actually capable of."⁶ Goncharova switched to the Department of Painting and

3 Eli Eganburi [Ilya Zdanevich], *Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov* (Moscow: Munster, 1913).

4 Natalia Goncharova, *Vstavka kartin Natalii Sergeevni Goncharovoy 1900–1913* (Natalia Sergeevna Goncharova's Picture Exhibition) (Moscow: Khudozhestvenny salon, 1913).

5 "...я очень хорошо знаю, что я твое произведение и что без тебя ничего бы не было," Natalia Goncharova, letter to Mikhail Larionov, May 17, 1946, in *Mikhail Larionov—Natalia Goncharova: Shedevry iz parizhskogo nasledia. Zhivopis': catalog vstavki* (Mikhail Larionov—Natalia Goncharova: Masterpieces from Parisian Heritage. Paintings. Exhibition Catalogue) (Moscow: RA, 1999), 182.

6 "У Вас глаза на цвет, а Вы заняты формой. Раскройте глаза на собственные глаза," Mikhail Larionov about 1901, in Tsvetaeva, "Natalia Goncharova. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo," 49.

immediately found herself immersed in the art life of the capital. From their earliest steps together, they firmly established themselves as inventors of a new art.⁷ The sources of Goncharova's stylistic development were common to many of the future avant-garde artists. In the art school, it was the workshop of Konstantin Korovin; outside, the contemporary Western art collections of Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov. The great dream of the young artist was to take part in the exhibition of *Zolotoe Runo* [Golden Fleece], along with some of the modern French masters. "At the beginning of my work, I mostly learned from modern French artists," Goncharova recalled.⁸ Her learning period lasted about five years, up to 1910; thereafter she and Larionov, among other artists, introduced the first Russian avant-garde movement: Neoprimitivism.⁹

Avtoportret s zholtymi liliyami (Self-portrait with Yellow Lilies, 1907–08, fig. 14.1) was shown in the 1913 exhibition and can be considered a manifest of Neoprimitivism. Instead of graceful proportions, her self-portrait depicts an unfeminine, heavy hand; instead of carefully shaped facial features, we see unadorned lines; instead of the noble oval form of the head, a stylized block. Goncharova has simplified the form in a Gauguin-like manner, giving herself the appearance of one of Gauguin's Tahitian women. It is not immediately apparent that we are witnessing a deliberate act of destruction of the classical canons of beauty, enforced by the author's presence. Portraiture in general is a particularly poignant genre of painting as it demonstrates the universal theme of cognitive activity: "the world and the individual," and in the case of her so-called self-portrait: art and the artist. If we take the self-portrait in the classical tradition of an artist's self-representation, then the appearance of the self-portrait in the artistic vocabulary of Goncharova may be more than surprising. She said: "I laugh at people who preach individuality and find value

7 Among these exhibitions were *Stephanos* (Moscow, 1907), *Venok* (Wreath, St. Petersburg, 1908), *Zolotoe runo* (Golden Fleece, Moscow, 1908, 1909, 1909–10), *Salon Izdebskogo* (Izdebsky's Salon, Odessa, 1909, 1910–11), Natalia Goncharova's personal exhibition (Moscow, 1910), *Bubnovy Valet* (Ace of Diamonds, Moscow, 1910–11), *Osliny Khvost* (Donkey's Tail, Moscow, 1912), *Mishen* (Target, Moscow, 1913), etc.

8 "В начале моего пути я более всего училась у современных французов," in *Natalia Goncharova. Gody v Rossii* (Natalia Goncharova. Years in Russia) (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2002), 291.

9 The first exhibition paving the way for primitive art was *Osliny khvost* (Donkey's Tail, Moscow, 1912). The term "neo-primitivism" appeared in the following brochure: Alexandr V. Shevchenko, *Neoprimitivism: Ego teoria. Ego vozmozhnosti. Ego dostizhenia* (Neoprimitivism: Its Theory. Its Possibilities. Its Achievements) (Moscow: Tipografia 1-y Moskovskoy Trudovoy Arteli 1913).



FIGURE 14.1

Natalia Goncharova, Self-Portrait with Yellow Lilies, 1907–08, oil on canvas, 77.5 × 58.2 cm

STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW,
INV. 8965, © VG BILD-KUNST, BONN 2016

in one's 'self.'¹⁰ Furthermore, Goncharova's 1907–08 *Self-Portrait with Yellow Lillies* possessed an unprecedented occurrence. The famous self-portrait of Zinaida Serebryakova, *Za tualetom* (Making Her Toilet), was created a year later, in 1909, and in a totally different, classical "narcissistic" tradition. But the style of Goncharova's self-portrait can be aligned with other future avant-garde male artists' self-portraits: Kazimir Malevich (1908–09, fig. 14.2), Ivan Kliun (1909–10, fig. 14.3), etc.; in this we see an aspect of Goncharova's sense of innovation at work, which changed and gave new meaning to the traditional genre of portrait-painting by adding to it a conceptual purpose.

The genre of the self-portrait underwent substantial conceptual changes in the years leading up to the avant-garde era. Beginning with Symbolism, artists took new stances in relation to themselves and the world they were addressing. The space of the canvas became the space of the author's declaration of artistic principles. Words and ideas began to force their way into the artists' work, and although they were not visible in their paintings, one senses them boiling up from below and just beginning to surface visually in the 1910s. The individuality

10 "Мне смешны люди, проповедующие индивидуальность и полагающие какую-то ценность в своем 'я'," in *N.S. Goncharova i M.F. Larionov. Issledovaniya i publikatsii* (N.S. Goncharova and M.F. Larionov. Studies and Publications) (Moscow: Nauka, 2001), 84. It is part of the preface to the catalogue of the solo exhibition that took place in Moscow in 1913.

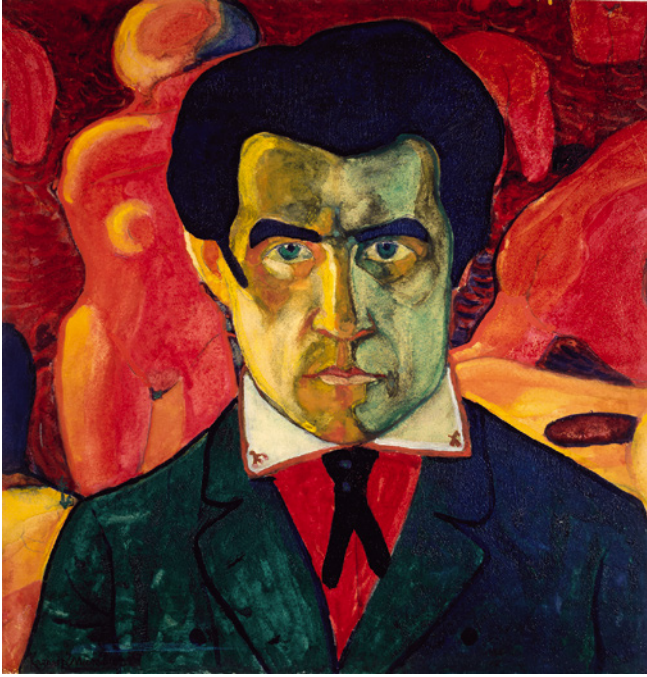


FIGURE 14.2 *Kazimir Malevich, Self-Portrait, 1908–09, watercolor, gouache on paper, 27 × 26.8 cm*
STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW

of the artist, his genius, ceded the way to art itself—to the artist’s stylistic work of creation. Thus it became characteristic of the avant-garde self-portrait “to weave” the artist into the fabric of his or her painting and stylistic credo.

A New Kind of Beauty

Goncharova was not an adherent of art theory and shunned public discussions. Recalling her first speech at a debate in the Polytechnic Museum in 1912, she said: “Lord, what was heard there. I spoke for the first time in front of a large audience, and, moreover, surprisingly calmly, despite the fact that the presidium was making it terribly difficult to talk by interjecting comments.”¹¹ It was

11 “Господи, что там слушалось. Я говорила в первый раз перед большой аудиторией, и притом удивительно хладнокровно, несмотря на то, что президиум страшно мешал говорить, вставляя свои замечания,” Natalia Goncharova, diary entry, January 1912, in *ibid.*, 79.



FIGURE 14.3 *Ivan Kliun, Self-Portrait, 1909–10, oil on board, 47.5 × 42 cm*
STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW

precisely the genre of self-portrait that provided Goncharova with the space she needed—not only for painting, but also for thought—to freely state her artistic choices without fighting off attacks from “listeners.” It is noteworthy that Goncharova portrayed herself against the backdrop of her earlier works, created in the style of French painting, while her monumental Gauguinish figure contrasts with their style. Her figure is not static, with the potential for movement expressed in her pose, as if ready “to explore from the Westernmost tip a new path” leading towards the East.¹² At the time of this work’s execution, Goncharova had not yet formulated her artistic position, but in the context of the 1913 exhibition, this painting resounded with its author’s ideas: “I am reopening the path towards the East and on this way, I am sure, many will

12 “На самом Западе исследовать новый путь,” *ibid.*, 84.

follow me.”¹³ It was in an Eastern outlook that Goncharova found inspiration and upon which she based her reinterpretation of beauty.

Unlike the male self-portrait, a woman’s self-portrait cannot avoid the subject of beauty. In her position as a trendsetter in both art and fashion, Goncharova quickly became a point of aesthetic reference for many.¹⁴ In Russian art, Goncharova played the same role as Paul Gauguin played in France: she created new female aesthetics of body and beauty. Her understanding of beauty was based on peasant folklore, on its rough plasticity. The idea of restoring the primordial beauty of the human body has been realized in Russian art by various approaches and at various times. The ideal of beauty for the artists of the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group was the antique archaic, with its ancient Eastern artistic features; thus, Ida Rubinstein, in her portrait by Valentin Serov (1910), is depicted in an exquisite arabesque, like “a coming-to-life incorporeal ancient oriental relief.”¹⁵ The aesthetic ideals of the Neoprimitivist artists, among them Larionov and Goncharova, go back to Prehistoric times, to cave drawings as the cradle of visual language and to Scythian sculptures. In 1907 Goncharova visited the Chersonese archeological excavations, where she saw for the first time the Scythian stone sculptures which soon made their way onto her canvases, as can be seen in her paintings *Bozhestvo plodorodiya* (God of Fertility, 1909–10, State Tretyakov Gallery) and *Solyanye stolpy* (Pillars of Salt, c. 1909–10, State Tretyakov Gallery).

The discovery of Scythian gold, the opening of their burial sites, the gradual revelation of this ancient culture in early twentieth century created a trend to all things Scythian, in art, as well as in literature, for example, Elizaveta Kuzmina-Karavaeva’s book of poems *Scifskie cherepki* (Scythian Shards, 1912). The excavations revealed that Scythian rulers colored their bodies (what we would today call “body art”), which most probably gave birth to the Futurist style of facial make-up, actively elaborated on by David and Vladimir Burluk, Goncharova and Larionov. “The “backward countdown,” undertaken by Goncharova, was not a private effort at individual interpretation, but

13 “Я заново открываю путь на Восток и по этому пути, уверена, за мной пойдут многие,” *ibid.*, 83–85.

14 Sergei Diaghilev writes that “the most exciting thing is that others imitate not only her art but also her looks,” in Tsvetaeva, “Natalia Goncharova. Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo,” 64.

15 “Оживающий бесплотный древневосточный рельеф,” Mikhail Allenov, *Russkoye iskusstvo XVIII—nachala XX veka* (Russian Art From 18th to Early 20th Centuries) (Moscow: Trilistnik, 2008), 399.

a widespread phenomenon in the cultural circle of European civilization, in which Goncharova played the role of aesthetic luminary.

Unity and Diversity

After attending a concert of Wanda Landowska, Goncharova offered her opinion on the works the pianist performed: “One thing was amazingly rich and diverse, but two-three pieces were performed in a row and did not differ in their meaning and inner spirit.”¹⁶ This reproach for monotony highlights a point of Goncharova’s artistic program: Do not repeat yourself, “[do not] put boundaries and limits in terms of artistic achievements.”¹⁷ This principle was stated in the catalog for the 1913 exhibition and was fully realized in her paintings. Goncharova’s fascination with various stylistic systems, however, led to accusations of eclecticism from her critics: “Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Rayonism of Larionov... but where is Natalia Goncharova herself, her artistic ‘self’?”¹⁸ Goncharova, in turn, foreseeing similar attacks, said: “Eclecticism? I do not understand it. Eclecticism is a patchwork quilt. Continuous seams. If there are no seams—it is mine.”¹⁹

The multifaceted nature of Goncharova’s art during her Russian period is made clear in the program *Vsechestvo* [Everythingism], proclaimed by Ilya Zdanevich in his 1913 lecture dedicated to Goncharova’s exhibition.²⁰ It affirmed an artistic right to overcome all national, stylistic, and cultural barriers in art. The program created a theoretical basis for the artist’s interests in various Eastern and Western styles and for a familiarization with the artistic experience of folk culture. A genuine perception of folklore lay beyond formal copying for Goncharova, and she based her method on a deep appreciation of folk motifs. Larionov noted that the multiform nature of popular prints was not

16 “Одна вещь, сыгранная ею, удивительно богата и разнообразна, две-три, сыгранные подряд, ничем не отличаются по смыслу и внутреннему духу одна от другой,” Natalia Goncharova, diary entry, January 1912, in *N.S. Goncharova i M.F. Larionov*, 78.

17 “Не ставить себе никаких границ и пределов в смысле художественных достижений,” *ibid.*, 84.

18 Jakob Tugendhold, “Vystavka kartin Natalyi Goncharovoi (pismo iz Moskvy)” (Natalia Goncharova’s Picture Exhibition), *Apollon*, 8 (October 1913), 72.

19 “Эклектизм? Я этого не понимаю. Эклектизм—одеяло из лоскутов. Сплошные швы. Раз шва нет—мое,” in Tsvetaeva, “Natalia Goncharova. Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo,” 73.

20 Elena V. Basner, “Lektsii Ilyi Zdanevicha” (Lectures of Ilya Zdanevich), in *N.S. Goncharova i M.F. Larionov. Issledovaniya i publikatsii* (N.S. Goncharova and M.F. Larionov. Studies and Publications) (Moscow: Nauka, 2001), 172–190.

a result of random experiments by folk artists, but the effect of an advanced tradition for different techniques and technologies. The same can be noted in relation to folk toys and icon painting, which share some common artistic and conceptual aspects in offering freedom to vary the manner of execution. This was the direction in which Goncharova aimed her artistic efforts in an attempt to renew the artistic language through a return to folk sources.

And precisely here, she was able to find the threads of artistic succession, lost through the ages, and restore these lost traditions to art. She synthesized various versions of old Russian art, fusing classic painting with folk painting, icons with abstract art, popular prints with Cubism. Under the label of *Vsechestvo*, Goncharova created for herself absolute freedom in genre and out-of-genre preferences. The portrait of Larionov (1913, fig. 14.4) demonstrates how she crossed the elements of Cubism, Rayonism, Futurism, assimilating them into the form of a ceremonial portrait.

Taking into account her creative temperament and the speed with which her brush reacted to everything that happened around her, the extreme points of her stylistic and thematic fluctuations were far apart. Ilya Zdanevich said: “She was so enthralled by her work that seeing or hearing something was enough to make her start a new painting.”²¹ Diversity was not a programmatic



FIGURE 14.4

*Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, 1913,
oil on canvas, 105 × 78 cm*

MUSEUM LUDWIG, COLOGNE, © VG BILD-
KUNST, BONN 2016

21 “Она так увлекалась работой, что достаточно ей было что-либо увидеть или услышать—она тотчас писала картину,” in Eganburi/Goncharova, *Michail Larionov*, 21.

choice for Goncharova, but the result of her attitude to the creative act, which was based on her unfiltered and emotional experiences. This aspect of her approach does not coincide with the methods of other avant-garde artists, who began from a formal search, from art rather than life. For Goncharova, playing with forms was tantamount to theorizing, in which she did not see much use. But her attitude toward natural objects is more complicated than it seems at first. “Étudier la vie en elle-même”²² (To study life itself)—was the main artistic principle proclaimed by Goncharova. This, she recognized, was the way of icon painters, who created a canonical style that transmitted to the viewer “the mystical meaning and abstract notions of things,” and she made this method her own.²³ She sought certain universalities in ancient objects of art that would become the spiritual constants of her style and, at the same time, give her the possibility to experiment. This position, though formulated by Goncharova in later years, provided conceptual unity to the works of her Russian period. This unity is perceived as an integral system, consistent in its adaption of changes, while belonging to the wider world system of art that originated in ancient times.

Inspiring the Discussion

Goncharova's vigorous work did not lead her to form her own artistic school (as did Kazimir Malevich, Pavel Filonov, Mikhail Larionov in part, and others). Her mission in art was different: not to teach, but to inspire; not to talk, but to work; not to make theories, but to create art. She was a spiritual point of reference in the noisy ensemble of the avant-garde choir. The uniqueness of her work lies in its ability to remain faithful to the visual world and to nature and, at the same time, be modern and up-to-date. The exhibition of 1913 was more than a simple display of her works—it became a field for discussion, which attracted fundamental questions about the origins of Russian culture and the contemporary direction of Russian art. Its central aim was to showcase the artist's works, created during the many years of her incredibly productive artistic tempo. The sum of her works in the exhibition, hung in a chaotic manner and without chronology, posed a number of conceptual issues, thus turning

22 Goncharova's original French manuscript *Étudier la vie en elle-même* (Study Life Itself) (not dated, probably 1950s) is kept in the archives of the State Tretyakov Gallery, ф. 180, № 71.

23 “*Le sens mystique et abstrait des choses*,” *ibid.*

a common exhibition into an art project. Among these issues was the aforementioned problem of an artist's self-determination in relation to the world, as well as the principles of beauty, unity, and diversity. There was also another topic, which became an integral part of the artistic legacy of Goncharova, and that was the question of Russia's national self-determination in the East-West coordinate system. This paradigm was defined in her works and accentuated in the catalogue's foreword: "I shake off the dust from my feet and move away from the West... my way is toward the source of all the arts, to the East."²⁴ By the time of this proclamation, the eastward direction no longer reflected the contemporary scene of the new Russian art.²⁵ But what is more important for us, however, are the ideas and impulses created originating in the exhibition of 1913. The public pronouncement on this question of direction played a significant role in the revival of the centuries-old discourse about Russia's place between the East and West.

Goncharova was not the first Russian artist to discover the East. Many cultural figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century turned their attention eastward, seeing there an inexhaustible source of art. Vasily Vereshchagin wrote to Ivan Kramskoi: "I want to go round the Amur, Japan, China, Tibet and India..."²⁶ Vasily Polenov set out on a pilgrimage to the East to work on themes of his cycle on the life of Christ. At the turn of the century, Oriental motifs appeared in the works of the artists of the *Mir iskusstva* group. It is important to note that the interest in the East among Russian artists, up to the twentieth century, was a specifically Western artistic influence and, as a result, the Russian view of the East (with a few exceptions) was through the lens of the West.²⁷ The avant-garde approach to this theme, however, had a fundamentally different nature: the East was no longer a fairytale place or a dream of the lost paradise. For Goncharova, as well as for Larionov and other "radicals," it became a second homeland—a cultural one.

24 "Я отряхаю прах от ног своих и удаляюсь от Запада [...] мой путь к первоисточнику всех искусств к Востоку." *N.S. Goncharova i M.F. Larionov*, 83.

25 See Irina A. Vakar, *Mezhdru vostokom i zapadom. Iskusstvo i sudba Natali Goncharovoy* (Between East and West: Art and Life of Natalia Goncharova), *Nashe Nasledie* (Our Heritage) Moscow 2014, № 109.

26 "Хочу объехать Амур, Японию, Китай, Тибет и Индию [...]," in Vasilii Vereshagin, *Izbrannye pisma* (Selected Letters) (Moscow: Izobrazitelnoye iskusstvo, 1981), 29.

27 See Dmitry Sarabianov, "Образ Востока в русской живописи Нового времени" (Image of the East in Russian Painting of Modern Era), in Dmitry Sarabyaniv, *Russkaya zhivopis. Probuzhdenie pamyati* (Russian Painting. Awakening the Memory) (Moscow: Iskusstvovoznaniye, 1998), 42–55.

One of the points of Goncharova's artistic program was "to take artistic inspiration from home and from the Near East."²⁸ The artist identified Russia with the East, characterizing this as a national characteristic. In her foreword to the catalog, Goncharova called for an immediate and direct dialogue with the culture of the East, predicting a return and reunion of the cultures. For other avant-garde artists, the East likewise was without specific geographical or physical borders, and served as a kind of general concept, not distant and aloof, but near and even native. At the same time the idea of the East was polygonal: it included Scythian, African, and Jewish art; the works of the Georgian painter Niko Pirosmani—in short, anything and everything that could offer an alternative to European art.

It is revealing that Goncharova's exhibition, recognized as well by Klavdia Mikhailova, found a poetic echo in a poem of Nikolai Gumilev²⁹ (1917–18, here, an excerpt):

A delicate and shining East
 Within herself Goncharova found,
 The greatness of present life
 In Larionov is harsh.

Within herself Goncharova found
 The peacock's color delirium and chant
 In Larionov is harsh
 The whirling of metal fire.

The peacock's color delirium and chant
 From India to Byzantium,
 The whirling of metal fire—
 The howl of the conquered Element.

From India to Byzantium
 Who slumbers, if not Russia?

28 "Черпать художественное вдохновение у себя на родине и на близком Востоке," *N.S. Goncharova i M.F. Larionov*, 83.

29 In 1917 Nikolai Gumilev arrived in Paris in hope of taking part in Sergei Diaghilev's enterprise. He pursued the idea of concert theatrical projects with Larionov and Goncharova. Due to Diaghilev's departure and further events in Russia, Gumilev was not able to realize his plans. The same year he wrote the poem *Pantum. Goncharova and Larionov*.

The howl of the conquered Element—
Isn't the Element revitalized?

Who slumbers, if not Russia?
Who sees the dream of Christ and Buddha?
Isn't the Element revitalized—
Sheaves of rays and piles of stones?³⁰

The poem is interesting not only because of its focus on Goncharova and Larionov as active adherents of the Oriental trend in the early 1910s, but also as an example itself of Oriental stylization. The form of the verse imitates the strophic form of the *pantun*, popular in Indonesian (Malayan) folk poetry. Through the figures of Goncharova and Larionov, Gumilev raises the eternal problem of Russia's position between East and West, between India and Byzantium, between Christ and Buddha. His words sound as a refrain to those of Vladimir Solovyov in his *Ex oriente lux* (1890):

30 Восток и нежный и блестящий
 В себе открыла Гончарова,
 Величье жизни настоящей
 У Ларионова сурово.

В себе открыла Гончарова
Павлиньих красок бред и пенье,
У Ларионова сурово
Железного огня круженье.

Павлиньих красок бред и пенье
От Индии до Византии,
Железного огня круженье—
Вой покоряемой стихии.

От Индии до Византии
Кто дремлет, если не Россия?
Вой покоряемой стихии—
Не обновленная ль стихия?

Кто дремлет, если не Россия?
Кто видит сон Христа и Будды?
Не обновленная ль стихия—
Снопы лучей и камней груды?

...O Rus! In high anticipation
 You dwell in proud thought;
 How do you want to be, the East:
 The East of Xerxes or of Christ?³¹

The theme of East and West is refracted in the poetry of Aleksandr Blok, Ivan Bunin, Valery Bryusov, Velimir Khlebnikov, who (despite the many differences in their views) perceived Russia as the point of intersection between eastern and western lines of development from whence Russian culture developed. Goncharova, through her art, had touched upon the central point of Russian contemporary social thought, which can be traced all the way back to the times of Peter the Great.

Instead of a Conclusion

In the 1950s, in France, when Goncharova's strength and ability to work were diminishing, she wondered: "A picture often contains a painting... But is it always necessary for the pictorial plane to accommodate the aims of a picture?"³² A rhetorical question, but it serves well as the final frame in the life that was Goncharova's and shows that she was still prepared to lead modern abstract art in new directions of non-figurative and abstract thought: the spirit of innovation stayed with Goncharova until the end of her life.

31 "О Русь! В предвиденье высокою
 Ты мыслью гордой занята;
 Каким же хочешь быть Востоком:
 Востоком Ксеркса или Христа?"

Vladimir Soloyov, *Ex oriente lux* (1890), http://max.mmlc.northwestern.edu/mdenner/Demo/texts/ex_oriente_lux.html.

32 "Картина иногда вмещает в себя живопись [...] Но всегда ли необходимо, чтобы живописная плоскость вмещала в себя задачу картины?" Goncharova, *Étudier la vie en elle-même*, archive of the State Tretyakov Gallery, ф. 180, № 57.

Women as Catalysts for Innovation in Printmaking: Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Elizaveta Kruglikova

Galina Mardilovich

Abstract

By the turn of the twentieth century, printmaking as an art medium had experienced a significant re-evaluation—aesthetically and technically—in the arts. This was especially so in Imperial Russia, where women artists, as much as their male counterparts, were at the forefront of experimentation in the medium. Focusing on Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Elizaveta Kruglikova and their work in color woodcut and monotype respectively, this essay explores how printmaking allowed these women artists to create professional, practical, and personal networks. In examining what about the printed medium enabled Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Kruglikova to foster innovative practices in their chosen techniques, this essay makes a case for the significance of printmaking in the development of modernism in Russian art.

At the break of the twentieth century, following her inclusion in the first exhibition of the *Mir iskusstva* (World of Art) group in 1899, Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva entered the All-Russian printmaking competition, organized by the *Obshchestvo pooshchreniya khudozhestv* (Society for the Encouragement of the Arts) in 1900. She had been diligently studying the woodcut technique at the Imperial Academy of Arts under Professor Vasily Mate and was aiming to submit a program for graduation later that year. Perhaps as a way to test her skills, Ostroumova-Lebedeva chose to participate in the competition, taking part in the division *Staryi drug luchshe novykh dvukh* (One Old Friend Is Better than Two New).¹ For her entry, she reproduced Peter Paul Rubens' *Perseus and Andromeda*, from the Hermitage's collection (fig. 15.1). Carving

* I am grateful to the Royal Historical Society for enabling my participation in this conference and the resulting publication.

1 Nikolai Romanov, *Katalog vystavki. Graviury na dereve A.P. Ostoumovoy-Lebedevoy* (Exhibition catalogue. Woodcuts by A.P. Ostroumova-Lebedeva) (Moscow: Kabinet Graviur Imperatorskago Moskovskago i Rumiantsovskago museya, 1916), 13.



FIGURE 15.1 *Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Perseus and Andromeda after Peter Paul Rubens, 1899–1900, color woodcut, 32.5 × 46 cm*

© STATE RUSSIAN MUSEUM, ST. PETERSBURG

three woodblocks, she used one to delineate the composition and two to create tonal effects—a practice she had studied from traditional chiaroscuro prints. Not having significant previous experience in color printing, Ostroumova-Lebedeva fussed with the paper, later writing in her memoir how she dipped the papers in tea and coffee to vary the darkness of the sepia tone.² However, upon receiving *Perseus and Andromeda*, the jury of the competition assumed it was a watercolor and rejected it.³ Not startled by the immediate disqualification, Ostroumova-Lebedeva re-sent the print with a letter explaining the specifics and methods used in creating it.⁴ The work was accepted, and Ostroumova-Lebedeva was awarded the second prize, with the first prize given

2 Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski* (Autobiographical notes) (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2003), vol. 1, 185. She wrote that she was thankful to have Japanese paper she bought in Paris, as it was able to withstand her trials.

3 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 1, 186.

4 Sergei Ernst, “Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo Ostroumovoi” (Life and work of Ostroumova), in *Ostroumova-Lebedeva*, ed. Alexandre Benois and Sergei Ernst (Moscow-Petrograd: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1924), 42–43.

to a tonal wood engraving by Ivan Glukhov, reproducing another Rubens, *Saturn Devouring His Son*.⁵

In light of the type of prints that Russian artists—including women artists such as Natalia Goncharova and Olga Rozanova—would be producing within a little over a decade, Ostroumova-Lebedeva's second-prize experiment looks hardly ground-breaking or controversial. But, as she herself later recounted, color woodcut as a technique was not practiced in Russia, and since even few printmaking connoisseurs knew about color prints, it was no surprise then that her work received such cautious appraisals. So what happened between the competition in 1900 and the avant-garde's foray into printmaking that fostered the radically new approach to the medium, establishing Russian art with full force in the art historical canon? What facilitated this shift? And what role, if any, did women play in the surrounding changes?

This essay is an attempt to start answering these questions. The Russian avant-garde's experiments that resulted in ground-breaking futurist books, as well as women artists involved in the movement, including Natalia Goncharova, Olga Rozanova, and Lyubov Popova, have rightfully garnered much scholarly attention.⁶ Yet, it is important to expand discussion and to consider possible forerunners to innovative practices in the printed medium. Accordingly, this essay examines the approaches to printmaking by two artists: Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Elizaveta Kruglikova. While their trials in the medium immediately preceded those of the avant-garde, their work greatly contributed to, if not paved the way for, much of the re-evaluation of printmaking in Russia in the early twentieth century.

Long before Ostroumova-Lebedeva's *Perseus and Andromeda*, printmaking in Russia had become intertwined with and limited to economically profitable uses. In the nineteenth century, techniques such as lithography and wood engraving were largely employed for illustrations and emerging popular press.

5 Stijn Alsteens, "Anna Ostroumova-Lébedéva," in *Un Cabinet particulier. Les estampes de la Collection Frits Lugt* (A special cabinet. Prints from the collection of Frits Lugt), ed. Hans Buijs (Paris: Fondation Custodia, 2010), 74.

6 For example, see Susan P. Compton, *The World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books 1912–1916* (London: British Museum Publications, 1978); Evgeny Kovtun, "Experiments in Book Design by Russian Artists," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 5 (1987): 46–59; Margit Rowell and Deborah Wye, *The Russian Avant-Garde Book, 1912–1934* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002); John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt, eds, *Amazons of the Avant-Garde: Alexandra Exter, Natalia Goncharova, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, Varvara Stepanova, and Nadezhda Udaltsova* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2000); Jane A. Sharp, *Russian Modernism between East and West: Natalia Goncharova and the Moscow Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Traditional engraving was taught solely at the Imperial Academy of Arts and, as it was mainly used for reproductive purposes, was increasingly referred to as a “minor” art despite its inclusion in the institution. Furthermore, there was little opportunity in Russia to learn printmaking outside these established fields due to strict censorship laws and restricted ownership of equipment.

However, in the early 1870s, a small group of artists tried to stir the public’s awareness of the printed medium. This group, *Obshchestvo russkikh akvafortistov* (Society of Russian Etchers, 1871–75), comprised numerous painters such as Ivan Shishkin and Ivan Kramskoi, and explicitly aimed to bolster an appreciation of etching in Russia.⁷ Although the endeavor attracted little public support and was short-lived, several of the society’s members continued to develop their skills in the medium. One such artist was Shishkin: he published four independent albums of etchings and even received a gold medal for his achievements in the technique at the 1895 First All-Russian Printing Exhibition, suggesting that fine art printmaking was beginning to gather popular and critical acclaim by the end of the nineteenth century.⁸ Indeed, it was at the turn of the century that printmaking began to enter a new, dynamic phase in Russia.⁹

It should be noted that two more members of *Obshchestvo russkikh akvafortistov*, Ekaterina Mikhaltseva and Olga Kochetova, also continued their work in the technique following the dissolution of the group. In the 1880s, for example, they contributed prints to the academic journal *Vestnik iziashchnykh iskusstv* (The Fine Arts Herald, 1883–90), which was edited by Andrei Somov,

7 Galina Pavlova, “XIX vek” (XIX century), in *Graviura na metale: K 115-letiyu Russkogo muzeya* (Intaglio prints: In honour of the 115th anniversary of the Russian Museum), ed. Ekaterina Klimova, Elena Mishina, et al. (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2013), 36; Nina Markova, “Whistler i russkaya graviura” (Whistler and Russian printmaking), in *Whistler i Rossiya* (Whistler and Russia), ed. Galina Andreeva and Margaret F. McDonald (Moscow: Skanrus, 2006), 152; Dmitry Rovinsky, *Podrobny slovar’ russkikh graverov XVI–XIX vv* (Detailed dictionary of Russian printmakers XVI–XIX centuries) (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaya Akademiya nauk, 1895), vol. 1, 123–125.

8 For Shishkin, see Galina Pavlova, “I.I. Shishkin kak ofortist i litograf” (I.I. Shishkin as an etcher and lithographer), in *Ivan Shishkin*, ed. A. Laks (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions: Grafisart, 2008), 37–43, 158–173; Nina Markova, “I.I. Shishkin—risovalshchik i ofortist” (I.I. Shishkin—draughtsman and etcher), in *Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin, 1832–1898*, ed. L. Iovleva and G. Churak (Moscow: Skanrus, 2007), 155–171; Galina Mardilovich, “Ivan Shishkin as Etcher and His 32 States of *Gurzuf*,” *Print Quarterly*, vol. XXX, (June 2013): 155–164.

9 See Evgenii Kovtun, *Die Wiedergeburt der künstlerischen Druckgraphik: Aus der Geschichte der russischen Kunst zu Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (The revival of artistic printmaking: from the history of Russian art of the early twentieth century) (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1984).

who during this period also instructed another woman-printmaker, Elizaveta Krasnushkina.¹⁰ However, these women-etchers remained largely unique in their pursuit of the medium. To be sure, by the second half of the nineteenth century, women were becoming more visible in the art world, especially in terms of art patronage.¹¹ From 1873, women also began to be admitted as full-time students into the Russian Academy.¹² But, as many artistic and social barriers persisted, women artists continued to be predominantly associated with the spheres of applied and decorative arts; the work produced on the estates of Abramtsevo and Talashkino, both spearheaded by women, or that by Elena Polenova and Maria Yakunchikova are only a few such examples.¹³ On the other hand, printmaking, a medium traditionally affiliated with male artists for its laborious and physically-straining process, to a great extent remained little exercised by women.¹⁴

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- 10 For more on Mikhaltseva, Kochetova and Krasnushkina, see Rovinsky, *Podrobny slovar*, vol. 2, 445–447, 381–381, 386–389. Interestingly, the first woman known to have been awarded a medal from the Academy was actually awarded so for printmaking: Marfa Dovgaleva received a second-class silver medal for her work in engraving as early as 1812 (and then a first-class silver medal in 1815). For Dovgaleva, see Rovinsky, *Podrobny slovar*, vol. 2, 195.
- 11 For a more general discussion of Russian women artists in the nineteenth century, see Rosalind P. Blakesley, “Women and the Visual Arts,” in *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn and Alessandra Rossi (Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2012), 91–117; Rosalind P. Blakesley, “A Century of Women Painters, Sculptors, and Patrons from the Time of Catherine the Great,” in *An Imperial Collection: Women Artists from the State Hermitage Museum*, ed. Jordana Pomeroy, Rosalind P. Blakesley, et al. (London: Merrell, 2003), 51–75; Jeremy Howard, “Women Emergent,” in *East European Art, 1650–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 97–129.
- 12 In 1786 the classes at the Academy were again segregated, and remained so until the reforms of the Academy in 1894.
- 13 Alison Hilton, “Domestic Crafts and Creative Freedom: Russian Women’s Art,” in *Russia, Women, Culture*, ed. Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgreen (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), 347–376.
- 14 One of the few exceptions is the color etchings by Maria Yakunchikova, produced largely between 1892 and 1895. For more on Yakunchikova, see Mikhail Kiselev, *Maria Vasilyevna Yakunchikova, 1870–1902* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1979), especially 55–68. Ostroumova-Lebedeva later recalled that while visiting the World of Art’s editorial offices, she came across a landscape etched by Yakunchikova; under its influence, she made two color woodcuts, *Paths* and *The Little Valley*, both dated 1900. Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 1, 188; M. Kiselev, *Grafika A.P. Ostroumovoy-Lebedevoy. Graviura i akvarel* (The graphic art of A.P. Ostroumova-Lebedeva. Prints and watercolors) (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1984), 10.

Within this context, Ostroumova-Lebedeva's interest in printmaking was striking. In her memoir *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski* (Autobiographical Notes), she recounted that when she was young, before she realized that she was drawn to printmaking, she found herself carving things, alphabets, and designs, in wood. "When I got older, I started copying all sorts of things from *Vsemirnaya illiustratsiya* (World Illustration, 1869–98), *Niva* (The Grainfield, 1870–1918), and *Pchela* (The Bee, 1875–78), and that's when the illustrations, made in wood engraving, evoked a particular interest in me. I would study them for hours."¹⁵ Thus, when in 1889 she began to take classes at the *Tsentralnoe uchilishche tekhnicheskogo risovaniia A.L. Stieglitza* (Central Stieglitz School of Technical Drawing), Ostroumova-Lebedeva chose to study with the renowned wood engraver Vasily Mate. Though, within a few months of copying others' works, as was the established practice, Ostroumova-Lebedeva grew bored of wood engraving and left the school.

A few years later, in 1892, she enrolled in the Academy to study painting, and later entered Ilya Repin's studio. It was around this time that Ostroumova-Lebedeva first encountered Japanese prints. Exhibited by the *Obshchestvo pooshchreniya khudozhestv* in 1896, the Japanese prints left a profound impression on the artist, which would later be evident in her own mature approach to printmaking.¹⁶ As critic Sergei Ernst later wrote, "With unconscious rapture, Ostroumova-Lebedeva would sit [at the exhibition] for hours at a time, enjoying the poetry and skill of the Japanese artists."¹⁷ She

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- 15 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 1, 160: "Когда я подросла, то стала копировать всякую ерунду из 'Всемирной иллюстрации', 'Нивы', 'Пчелы', и тогда особенный интерес вызывали во мне иллюстрации, сделанные деревянной гравюрой. Я подолгу их рассматривала." (Translations, unless otherwise noted, are author's own.)
- 16 Anon, *Ukazatel vystavki yaponskoy zhivopisi v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Pooshchreniya khudozhestv* (Handbook for the exhibition of Japanese art at the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts) (St. Petersburg: Tipo-lit. R. Golike, 1896). The exhibition mainly showed the collection of Sergei Kitaev, amassed while travelling to Japan for business in the second half of the nineteenth century. For more on Kitaev's collection, see Beata Voronova, "Sergei Nikolaevich Kitaev i ego yaponskaya kollektsiya" (Sergei Nikolaevich Kitaev and his Japanese collection), in *Chatsnoe kollektсионирование v Rossii. Materialy nauchnoy konferentsii 'Vipperovskie Chteniya-1994' Vypusk xxvii* (Private collecting in Russia. Materials from the scientific conference 'Vipperovskie Readings-1994' volume xxvii) (Moscow: Gosudarstvenny muzei izobrazitelnykh iskusstv imeni A.S. Pushkina, 1995), 160–165; Beata Voronova, *Yaponskaia graviura* (Japanese printmaking) (Moscow: Krasnaia ploshchad', 2008).
- 17 Ernst, *Ostroumova-Lebedeva*, 29: "Остроумова с бессознательным восторгом просиживала на ней целые часы, наслаждаясь поэзией и мастерством японских художников."

herself recollected: “I was struck by the sharp realism and simultaneously, the style and simplicity, the world of fantasy and mysticism.”¹⁸

This incident and Ostroumova-Lebedeva’s chance meeting the following year with Mate, who was then teaching at the Academy, reawakened her interest in printmaking. Shortly before she left to study painting in Paris, Mate convinced her to consider trying her hand in the printed medium one more time: he had pulled out a portfolio containing chiaroscuro woodcuts by Ugo da Carpi and Antonio Maria Zanetti.¹⁹ Ostroumova-Lebedeva was seized by what she saw; nothing similar to their technique was being practiced in Russia. This novelty and excitement swayed her, and before she left for France, she made a few trial wood engravings.²⁰ Upon returning to St. Petersburg in 1899, she enrolled full time to study in Mate’s printmaking studio, where he let her freely develop in her chosen medium. Under the influence of early Italian and Japanese prints, she began to pursue original wood-based engraving, as well as experiment with color printing.

In 1900, following her entry to the All-Russian printmaking competition, on Mate’s recommendation, *Perseus and Andromeda* became one of fourteen prints Ostroumova-Lebedeva submitted to the Academy’s annual competition for the title of Artist.²¹ Her works, however, received lukewarm reviews. After much debate, Ostroumova-Lebedeva was granted the title on account of a single vote: thirteen in favor, and twelve opposed. In her memoir, she recounted Mate’s story of the vote:

Kuindzhi stated out right that he did not understand anything and abstained, Beklemishev—same, V[ladimir] Makovsky announced that my prints were rubbish and nonsense, and Ilya Repin, while Vasily ... [Mate] was ardently defending me, shouted across the table: “Enough, enough, you’re in love with Ostroumova, and that’s why you’re defending her!”²²

Such a heated response from artists like Makovsky and Repin underscores just how novel Ostroumova-Lebedeva’s approach to color and printmaking

18 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 1, 96: “Меня поражал острый реализм и рядом—стиль и упрощение, мир фантастичности и мистики.”

19 *Ibid.*, 163–164.

20 *Ibid.*, 103, 162–163.

21 *Ibid.*, 190.

22 *Ibid.*, 190–191: “Куинджи прямо объявил, что он ничего в этом не понимает и воздерживается, Беклемишев—тоже, В. Маковский объявил, что мои гравюры дрянь и чепуха, а Илья Ефимович Репин, когда Василий Васильевич горячо меня защищал, крикнул через стол:—Довольно, довольно, вы влюблены в Остроумову, оттого и защищаете ее!”



FIGURE 15.2 Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *The Admiralty under Snow*, 1909, color woodcut, 9.4 × 14 cm

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was, and how, perhaps because she was a woman, her work seemed so easily dismissed by established artists. Yet, Mate's unfailing support and that of the emerging *Mir iskusstva* group, which avidly encouraged her in the first decade of her career, invigorated Ostroumova-Lebedeva's work (fig. 15.2). Her innovative practice and continued challenge of the accepted language of printmaking earned her respect from the younger generation of artists. Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, for example, would write that upon first meeting her, he was intimidated: "... in my eyes, this very clever woman was a huge maître."²³ Vadim Falileev, a pioneering printmaker in his own right, approached Ostroumova-Lebedeva in 1905 to learn about her methods, often visiting her studio with his friend Mikhail Larionov.²⁴ By 1915, future Soviet artist Nikolai Kupreianov also looked to Ostroumova-Lebedeva as an example. Like her teacher Mate, she encouraged them all to pursue their own styles and to seek their individual approaches within the technique.

23 Mstislav Dobuzhinsky as quoted in L. Aleshina and G. Sternin, eds, *Obrazy i liudi serebranogo veka* (Images and people of the silver age) (Moscow: Galart, 2005), 205: "в моих глазах эта большая умница была настоящий maître."

24 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 2, 329–330.

While Ostroumova-Lebedeva was advancing her method, Elizaveta Kruglikova was charting her own artistic career. Trained at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, Kruglikova moved to Paris in 1898, where she resided until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, returning to Russia only in the summers.²⁵ For the first two years in France, Kruglikova focused on drawing and painting, taking lessons at the Académie Vitti and Académie Colarossi, where she met many eager Russian, American, and French artists. She became interested in impressionism and post-impressionism, and was struck by the emerging aesthetic in graphic art in the works of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Théophile Steinlen, and Félix Vallotton.

Her own trials in printmaking began in 1903, when, after seeing Kruglikova's watercolors and drawings at an exhibition, printmaker Victor Roux-Champion recommended that she try her hand in etching.²⁶ Believing that her treatment of line could be developed more fully in the printmaking technique, he encouraged her, and from her first trials, she quickly became enamored with the process. Almost immediately, she began to experiment with other intaglio techniques, including soft-ground etching and aquatint (fig. 15.3). Under the guidance of the printmaker Manuel Robbe, Kruglikova soon tried printing in color.²⁷ And soon thereafter, she began printing in color from a single plate rather than multiple plates as was the common practice, further developing and improving her handling of the technique. Within a year of turning to etching, in 1904, Kruglikova became a member of the newly formed French society, *Société de la Gravure Originale en Couleurs*.²⁸

Around this time, she also began to exhibit her etchings in Russia and Paris, participating in *Mir iskusstva* shows, the exhibitions of the *Moskovskoye tovarishchestvo khudozhnikov* (Moscow Association of Artists), and the *Salon des Arts Décoratifs*.²⁹ In 1906, along with Ostroumova-Lebedeva, Kruglikova was included in Sergei Diaghilev's pivotal Russian art exhibition at the Salon

25 For a brief biography of Kruglikova, see S. Pererve, "Tvorcheskii put' E.S. Kruglikovoi" (The artistic path of E.S. Kruglikova), in *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection), ed. P. Kornilov (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 15–28.

26 Pererve, "Tvorchesky put'", 16.

27 Ibid., 17.

28 Ibid., 18.

29 In 1907, Kruglikova had a solo show at the Salon des Arts Décoratifs, where she only exhibited prints: thirty-three soft-ground etchings and twenty-one aquatints. V.A. Naumov, ed., *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova. Katalog vystavki k 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniya* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova. Exhibition catalogue in honour of 100th birthday.), exh. cat. (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennyi russky muzei, 1966), 10.



FIGURE 15.3 *Elizaveta Kruglikova, Cabaret des Innocents, Paris, 1905, soft-ground etching, 23.9 × 34.9 cm*

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d'Automne.³⁰ Her approach to printmaking garnered further notice as more and more Russian artists began to travel to Paris, often seeking her out to learn about the printed medium. Artists including Falileev, Lyubov Yakovleva-Shaporina, Nina Simonovich-Efimova, and Matvei Dobrov arrived on her doorstep with letters of introductions from professors and artists back in Russia.³¹ Kruglikova's studio in Montparnasse, at rue Boissonade, 17, was quickly becoming a thriving artistic center. As Alexandre Benois recollected: "I think there isn't a Russian artist, who, having been to Paris, hadn't stopped by Elizaveta Kruglikova's studio on Rue Boissonade."³²

30 Several other women, including Goncharova, Polenova, and Yakunchikova, were also included in the exhibition. Serge Diaghilev, ed, *Salon d'Automne: Exposition de l'Art russe* (Autumn Salon: Exhibition of Russian art) (Paris: [Moreau frères, éditeurs], 1906).

31 For example see Dobrov's account, Matvei Dobrov, "Znakomstvo s E.S. Kruglikovoi" (Acquaintance with E.S. Kruglikova), in *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection), ed. P. Kornilov (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 73–74.

32 Alexandre Benois, "Vместo predisloviya" (Instead of a forward), in *Parizh nakanune voyni v monotipiyakh E.S. Kruglikovoy* (Paris on the eve of the war in monotypes by

Indeed, by 1903 Kruglikova's studio was central not only to Russian and foreign artists, but also to cultural figures. It was the place where, following printmaking lessons in the afternoons, the likes of Konstantin Balmont, Maksimilian Voloshin, and Nikolai Gumilev congregated in the evenings, discussing the latest developments in art, reading poetry, or staging plays. It became an officially recognized society, referred to alternatively as the Russian Artistic Circle, Union des Artistes Russes, or the Montparnasse Circle.³³ As Stepan Yaremich commented, upon travelling to Paris, one could afford to miss seeing the catacombs or not climb the Eiffel Tower, but Kruglikova's studio was vital to everyone interested in art and artistic life.³⁴

Having met each other in 1904, Ostroumova-Lebedeva also became a frequent visitor to Kruglikova's studio during her trip to Paris in 1906. Ostroumova-Lebedeva recalled that upon entering her flat, place of prominence was occupied by the hand-operated printing press: "We would often find E[lizaveta] Kruglikova, when she would be printing her works."³⁵ Their relationship and mutual respect only grew in the following years. Ostroumova-Lebedeva would later write, "Our friendship lasted my entire life, giving me love, kind advice, and honest, fair criticism."³⁶ Moreover, they often helped

E.S. Kruglikova) (Petrograd: Union, 1916), 13: "Я думаю нету такого русского художника, который, побывав в Париже, не зашел бы к Елизавете Сергеевне Кругликовой в ее мастерскую на rue Boissonade."

33 While the details are the same, the periodical *Art* (*Iskusstvo*) published an article in 1905 describing the group as the Russian Artistic Circle in Montparnasse; documents found in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art name the group both as Russian Artistic Circle and Union des Artistes Russes; in their book on artistic associations, Dmitrii Severiukhin and Oleg Leikind include it simply as Monparnas. See Anon, "Russkii artisticheskii kruzhok v Parizhe—Mont Parnasse" (The Russian artistic circle in Paris—Mont Parnasse), *Iskusstvo* (*Art*), (1905) 1: 38; RGALI, f. 2479, op. 1; D. Severiukhin and O.L. Leikind, eds, "Monparnas' (Kruzhok russkikh khudozhnikov 'Monparnas')" ("Monparnas" (Circle of Russian artists "Monparnas")), in *Zolotoi vek khudozhestvennykh obyedineny v Rossii i SSSR (1820–1932)* (The golden age of artistic associations in Russia and USSR (1820–1932)) (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Chernysheva, 1992), 122–123.

34 Stepan Yaremich, "Parizh v otrazhenii russkoi khudozhnitsy" (Paris through the eyes of a Russian artist), in *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection), ed. P. Kornilov (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 75.

35 Ostroumova-Lebedeva, *Avtobiograficheskie zapiski*, vol. 2, 344: "Мы не раз заставляли Е.С. Кругликову, когда она печатала свои произведения."

36 *Ibid.*, 316: "Эта дружба прошла через всю мою жизнь, даря меня любовью, добрым советом и правдивой, честной критикой."



FIGURE 15.4 *Elizaveta Kruglikova, In the Wings. The Russian Season in Paris, 1909, color monotype, 8.9 × 14.6 cm*

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each other in practical terms: when it was difficult to find materials in Russia, for example, Kruglikova would ship specialized papers, inks, and even boards, to Ostroumova-Lebedeva from Paris.³⁷

In 1909, the year she was invited to teach etching at Académie de La Palette, Kruglikova's own experimentation with color and intaglio printmaking led her to produce a monotype (fig. 15.4). As the name suggests, a monotype is a print that can only be printed once, with the artist applying paint directly onto an untreated plate, and printing it in the same way as other intaglio techniques. Since the paint is transferred onto the paper without any incised preparatory lines, the image cannot be reproduced again. Historically, Giovanni Castiglione and William Blake were monotype's earliest practitioners, and Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Gauguin worked almost contemporaneously in the technique to Kruglikova's discovery, although she claimed to be unfamiliar with them at the time. Of her own experience, she explained,

In 1909 when I was working on themes for the theatre, I didn't have enough time to make etchings, and so I accidentally made a monotype,

37 For published letters between the two artists see P. Kornilov, ed., *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection) (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 53–59.

without even knowing that it was a monotype. It transpired that one could print without the biting process. [...] I was so immersed in the style of this technique, [...] I almost went mad from these new monotypes.³⁸

What appealed most to Kruglikova about monotype was that the difficulty of labor associated with printmaking, which had attracted her, was not visible in the final product.³⁹ The final result instead gave the impression of freedom and flexibility of expression, offering her at the same time a sense of unpredictability in a medium known for its calculated precision.

She exhibited her new prints, which she called “paintings in the style of a print,” in a solo exhibition in St. Petersburg in 1913, marking the first time monotypes were shown in Russia.⁴⁰ The ensuing public interest prompted Kruglikova in 1914 to publish an article entitled “Khudozhestvennaia graviura i tekhnika oforta i monotipii” (Artistic Printmaking and the Technique of Etching and Monotype).⁴¹ Here, she introduced Russian readers to various printmaking techniques and defended her use of monotype, noting that painters do not need to justify why they paint only one copy of their work. She explained that

38 Elizaveta Kruglikova, “Rozhdenie monotipii ‘Parizh nakanune voiny’” (The birth of monotypes “Paris on the eve of the war”), in *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection), ed. P. Kornilov (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 52: “В 1909 году при работе на театральные темы мне не хватало времени, чтобы делать офорты, и вот я нечаянно сделала монотипию, не зная даже, что это именно монотипия! Оказалось, что можно печатать без травления. [...] И я вошла во вкус этой новой своей манеры [...] я едва с ума не сошла от этих монотипий.”

39 P. Kornilov, *Graviury i siluety E.S. Kruglikovoi 1902–1925 gg. Katalog vystavki* (Prints and silhouettes by E.S. Kruglikova 1902–1925. Exhibition catalogue), exh. cat. (Kazan: Izdanie Tsentral'nogo Muzeia TSSR, 1925), 19.

40 Ekaterina Klimova and Irina Zolotinkina, eds, *Monotipia iz sobraniia Russkogo muzeia* (Monotypes from the collection of the Russian Museum) (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2011), 5: “живопись в манере эстампа.” Klimova and Zolotinkina also note that Kruglikova was not the first in Russia to experiment in monotype; Valentin Bystrenin, another student of Mate, also made monotypes as early as 1906, but these were never exhibited and remained short-lived experiments. *Ibid.*, 8.

41 Elizaveta Kruglikova with Nikolai Romanov, “Khudozhestvennaya graviura i tekhnika oforta i monotipii” (Artistic printmaking and the techniques of etching and monotype), *Iskusstvo v iuzhnoi Rossii* (Art in southern Russia), 1924, no. 3–4, reprinted in P. Kornilov, ed., *Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: zhizn' i tvorchestvo. Sbornik* (Elizaveta Sergeevna Kruglikova: life and art. Collection) (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969), 37–45.

the actual process of printing fascinated her, and that monotype had an exciting, unexpected dimension. Her use of it allowed her to manipulate color and tones to varying levels, giving the illusion of transparent watercolor and richness of oil painting simultaneously.

It is undeniable that Kruglikova's residency in France afforded her more access to materials and greater opportunity as a woman to work in printmaking than would have been possible in Russia. Nevertheless, it was her choice of the still developing discipline of printmaking—still developing in terms of its re-evaluation in Russia as a creative medium—that allowed Kruglikova to engage, on the one hand, with her home country where she was positioned as an expert in new trends, and on the other hand, with the international art world, where she was able to raise the visibility of Russian innovative practices through her teaching, studio, and exhibition of her work.

As the examples of Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Kruglikova briefly indicate, a renewed interest in printmaking as an independent art form in the beginning of the twentieth century provided a timely venue for women artists to emerge at the forefront of artistic practice in Russia. In fact, working in a medium that was only in the process of being re-assessed offered them the opportunity to greatly contribute to the changing course of the Russian art world. The relatively little-practiced field allowed women, and Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Kruglikova more specifically, to develop distinct visual styles and a commanding voice, side-stepping established artistic hierarchies—a near-impossible feat for women in other types of fine art media. To be sure, this shift was representative of the broader changes in the art world, but printmaking, more than any other media, allowed Ostroumova-Lebedeva and Kruglikova “to bridge the barriers that had compartmentalized and restricted” the arts, to use Alison Hilton's words.⁴² Printmaking gave women the rare chance of inaugurating themselves as pioneers, concurrently gaining international renown and elevating their chosen medium from its status as a “minor” or applied art. Additionally, by focusing on the materials, color, and the process of printmaking, these women were able to initiate new possibilities of experimentation within the medium, thereby cultivating not only a certain breakdown of existing artistic networks and social conventions in the Russian art establishment, but also aesthetic exploration.

42 Hilton, “Domestic Crafts,” 361.

First Modernist Women Artists in Latvia and Their Paths into the International Art Scene

Baiba Vanaga

Abstract

In the early twentieth century, a number of Latvian women artists, among them Milda Grīnfelde, Otilija Leščinska, and Lūcija Kuršinska, received training from European and Russian modernist artists and showed their artworks in exhibitions of modern art. The growth of Latvian modern art, however, is connected with the late 1910s and 1920s; its main force was the Riga Artists' Group, an association of young, mostly Russian educated painters and sculptors, who had connections to the European modernist trends. The only two female artists in this group—sculptress Marta Liepiņa-Skulme and painter Aleksandra Beļcova—played significant roles in the development of modernism in Latvia and participated in major local and some international arts exhibitions.

It is 1924. The French purists Amédée Ozenfant and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret are publishing a journal called *L'Esprit Nouveau*, and in its pages readers can find reproductions of cubist artworks by two female artists—the painter Aleksandra Beļcova and the sculptor Marta Liepiņa-Skulme.¹ Who were these two women, who became the most prominent of the early Latvian modernists? Before turning to their biographies and those of a few other early Latvian modernist women artists and their paths into the international art scene, it is worth briefly recalling the context of the time period in which they worked.

The territory of Latvia was a part of the Russian Empire until the establishment of the independent Latvian state in 1918, but as early as the mid-nineteenth century Latvian women were actively seeking possibilities to learn the artist's profession and participating in the local and international art scenes. Here, as in the most of Europe, education in the field of art was difficult for women to pursue; however, it might be added, the same was true for Latvian men, as the first school of art in the Latvian territory was only established

1 Roman Sutta, "Lettonie" (Latvia), *L'Esprit Nouveau* (New Spirit), 1924, No. 25, no page numbers.

in 1873, when the Baltic German artist Elise von Jung-Stilling (1829–1904), who trained in Dresden, opened a school of drawing in Riga. Jung-Stilling's school was the first art school in the southern Baltic region to be established by a woman,² and it laid the foundations for art education in Latvia. The school was particularly popular among women of German origin, and in 1904 there were about 105 students.³

After the death of Elise von Jung-Stilling, her school was taken over by the city of Riga and became the Riga City School of Art in 1906; painter Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945) became its director in 1909. Purvītis reorganized the school, reduced its fees, and increased the number of scholarships in order to reduce the prevalence of female students and provide opportunities for talented students with lesser means to study art. As a result, the ratio of male-to-female students increased dramatically: In the fall of 1908 the school had 34 female and only 11 male students, but by the beginning of 1915, men were in the majority, with 50 female and 70 male students.⁴ A number of future representatives of Latvian Classical Modernism began their art education there shortly before World War I.

Another popular art education institution in Riga before World War I was a drawing and painting school established by a graduate from the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, the Jewish artist Wenjamin Bluhm (1861–1919) in 1895. In 1904, the school had about 107 students and its graduates included both male and female artists of Russian, German, Jewish, and Latvian origin.⁵ A further important aspect of basic art education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a series of private art studios.

It is likely that the absence of serious local professional institutions of art education forced young artists to study abroad—especially in St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire, as well as such European art centers as Dresden, Munich, Paris and others. Early in the twentieth century, some female artists from Latvia studied with European and Russian modernist artists and exhibited their works in international exhibitions of modern art, but, with the exception of Aleksandra Beļcova and Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, this was a short

2 Jeremy Howard, *East European Art 1650–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 112.

3 L., "V.I. Blūma zīmēšanas un gleznošanas skola" (V.I. Blūms's Painting and Drawing School), *Baltijas Vēstnesis* (Baltic Herald), 1904, no. 12, January 16 (29): 3.

4 "Отчеты о деятельности школы" (Reports on School's Activities), *Latvian State Historical Archives*, fund 1417, description 1, file 2, 21 and 111.

5 L., "V.I. Blūma zīmēšanas un gleznošanas skola". *Baltijas Vēstnesis*. 1904, no. 12, January 16 (29): 3.

episode in their lives; most of them remained unknown and are not even mentioned in Latvian art history books.

Some Latvian art researchers have suggested that the first female artist of Latvian origin to exhibit her work abroad was Milda Grīnfelde (nee Brandt, 1881–1966),⁶ who exhibited three of her artworks at the Société des Artistes Indépendants exhibition, the so called Salon des Indépendents, in Paris, in 1913. But she was preceded by two other women artists from Latvia: Baltic German painter Alice Dannenberg (1861–1948), the graduate of the Jung-Stilling drawing school, who together with the Swiss painter Martha Stettler established a private art school, the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, in Paris, and the Baltic German painter and engraver Ida Fielitz (1847?–after 1913). Dannenberg's participation in the Independent Salon goes back to at least 1905,⁷ and Fielitz exhibited in the 1907 Salon.⁸

Milda Grīnfelde began her art education with the founders of the Latvian national school of painting, Vilhelms Purvītis and Janis Rozentāls (1966–1916) in Riga. She married the railway engineer Edgars Grīnfelds and followed him to the small town of Osa, in Perm Krai, Russia. In 1907, Grīnfelde gave birth to her son Nilss and during the winter of 1907/1908, she travelled to Moscow, where she studied under the landscape painters Nikolai Kholyavin and Stanislav Zhukowski. Later in 1908, Grīnfelde travelled to Paris and spent the next four winters there auditing classes at the École des Beaux-Arts. She also studied at the workshop of the post-impressionist Henri Martin, supposedly a private art school called Académie Vitti, where he taught (figs. 16.1, 16.2).

From Paris, she regularly sent letters with descriptions of her studies and impressions of Parisian life to her husband in Osa, who waited every spring for her to return home. In December 1911, Grīnfelde mentioned opportunities to exhibit her artworks in Paris:

Today I paid a fee to the Independent Artists [the Société des Artistes Indépendants], and that means that I might be able to exhibit artworks there. The exhibition won't be organized until March. Last year it was

6 Ženija Sūna-Peņģerote, "Pirmās latviešu gleznotājas" (First Latvian Women Painters), *Latviete* (Latvian Woman), 1936, No. 6–11, 43; Genoveva Tidomane, "Grīnfelde Milda", in *Māksla un arhitektūra biogrāfijās* (Art and Architecture in Biographies), vol 1 (Riga: Latvijas enciklopēdija, 1995), 180.

7 "Various art matters," *The New York Times*, April 22, 1905, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9402E0D7133AE733A25751C2A9629C946497D6CF>.

8 "Ida A. Fielitz," in Jochen Schmidt-Liebich, ed., *Lexikon der Künstlerinnen 1700–1900. Deutschland, Österreich, Schweiz* (Dictionary of Women Artists 1700–1900: Germany, Austria, Switzerland) (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2005), 139.

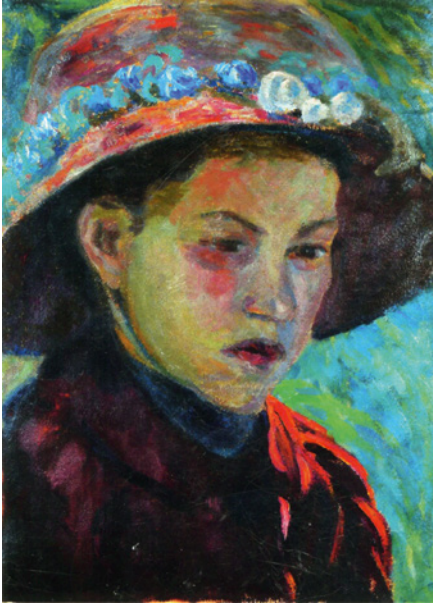


FIGURE 16.1
*Milda Grīnfelde, Girl with a Hat, c. 1910, oil
 on cardboard, 35 × 25 cm*
 PRIVATE COLLECTION, RIGA



FIGURE 16.2
*Milda Grīnfelde, Still Life. At the Window,
 c. 1913, oil on canvas, 58 × 65 cm*
 LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART,
 RIGA

possible to send 6 paintings, but this year only 3. That is bad because it's not enough to really demonstrate my personality. It is an enormous exhibition, with some 15,000 exhibits. I grew dizzy visiting it. I will also try to exhibit with the Société des Artistes Français, and that will not be hard: all that I have to do is present one of my paintings to good old Martin, and that will be that. No fee is needed to take part there. It is an 'official' salon.

There is a second, equally official salon, the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. It is hard for foreigners to exhibit artworks there without a recommendation. [...] Both exhibitions are bad because there is a great deal of patronage there. There are many old men. Pictures with white frames are not accepted, and all paintings have to have golden frames. The Independent Salon allows one to become better known, and that means receiving invitations to exhibitions.⁹

The letter suggested that Grīnfelde had already planned to take part in the Salon des Indépendents in 1912, after a Cubism scandal had emerged during the previous year. The question remains, as to whether she took part in the exhibition when she planned to do so, or whether she did so for the first time only in the following year (1913), as Latvian art historians have come to believe. I was unable to find a catalogue of the Salon des Indépendents of 1912, but in the 1913 catalogue Grīnfelde's name is included, indicating that she had exhibited a portrait and landscapes of the Ural Mountains,¹⁰ and a review in the Latvian press indicates that those paintings had been produced in an impressionist manner.¹¹

In the same letter to her husband, Grīnfelde expressed dissatisfaction with the painter Oto Skulme (1889–1967). The two of them had studied together in Riga and later in Moscow, but he delayed sending her information about participation in an exhibition that was being prepared in St. Petersburg by a group of Russian avant-garde artists, Soyuz molodyozhi (Union of the Youth). “If Skulme misses that exhibition [Soyuz molodyozhi], then he must be lashed

9 “Šodien iemaksāju pie Neatkarīgajiem (*Société des Artistes Indépendents*), tā kā izstādīšana tur man nodrošināta. Izstāde būs tikai martā. Pērn varēja 6 bildes sūtīt, šogad tik 3. Slikti tas ir, jo nevar lāga savu personību parādīt. Milzīga izstāde, kādi 15,000 eksponātu. Galva reibst, kad cauri iet. Lūkošu pie *Société des Artistes Français* arī, grūti tas nebūs: jānoiet tik pie vecā Martina jāparāda kāda bilde un iekšā būs. Tur jāmaksā par piedalīšanos nav. Tas ir tā sauktais oficiēlais salons. Ir vēl otrs tik pat oficiēls (*Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*) tikai tur ar bildēm ietikt ārzemniekam bez rekomendācijas grūti. [...] Slikti viņi ir abi, tamdē], ka lieta tur caur protekcijām notiek. Vecu vecu tur milzums. Ar baltiem rāmjiem nevienu viņi neuzņemot, vajagot visiem zelta rāmjus. Caur Neatkarīgo salonu tāpat tiek pazīstams un dabū vēlāk uzaicinājumus uz izstādēm”. A letter by Milda Grīnfelde from Paris to Edgars Grīnfelds in Osa, December 15, 1911. *Literature and Music Museum*, inv. 709849.

10 *Société des artistes indépendants: Catalogue de la 29e exposition 1913* (Society of the Independent Artists: Catalogue of the 29th Exhibition 1913) (Paris: L'Emancipatrice, 3, rue de Pondichery, 1913), 135.

11 Sillarts [Ernests Puriņš], “Parīzes mākslas saloni” (Paris Art Salons), *Druva* (Cornfield), 1913, no. 8, 1016.

without mercy," she wrote. "I had counted on exhibiting my artworks in Paris and St. Petersburg at the same time."¹² Grīnfelde's plans to take part in the exhibition apparently were not realized, as her name is not to be found in the catalogues of exhibitions which Soyuz molodyozhi staged during that period of time.¹³

It is absolutely certain, however, that the artist took part in the 3rd Exhibition of Latvian Artists in Riga, in December 1913. She exhibited several works, described by reviewers as "painted securely and with conviction."¹⁴ Grīnfelde drew on simple and everyday motifs at the time; her paintings were mostly landscapes and portraits. One gets the sense of a mature artistic style typified by impressionistically free brush strokes and subjectively brighter tones.

Presumably for family reasons, Milda Grīnfelde did not continue her studies in Paris after spring 1912, but returned to her husband and son in Russia; together with them, she travelled once more to Paris in February-March 1913 to participate in the Salon des Indépendants. The next known participation by the artist in an exhibition was during World War II, thereafter she returned to Latvia and remained there for the rest of her life.

Another Latvian artist, who started a promising career with a modernist touch but is unknown today, is Otilija Leščinska (1884–1923). She attended Wenjamin Bluhm's drawing and painting school in Riga until 1906. As a contact person for the revolutionary underground during the Russian aftermath of the terror campaign in December 1906, Leščinska fled to London, where she worked as a tutor. In 1909, she moved to St. Petersburg and studied at Leshaft's Courses for Higher Education and later at the school of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, focusing on painting and ceramics. In 1917, Leščinska returned to Riga and worked as a clerk and applied arts craftswoman. Then, in 1923, while on summer holidays in Finland, she drowned in the rapids of the river Imatra.

12 "Ja tas Skulme man tagad to izstādi (*Союз молодёжи*) nokavē, tad viņš ir sukājams bez žēlastības. Es tā biju rēķinājuse reizē Parīzē un Pēterburgā izstādīt". Letter by Milda Grīnfelde from Paris to Edgars Grīnfelds in Osa, December 15, 1911, *Literature and Music Museum*, inv. 709849.

13 Information about the catalogues of the exhibitions by the *Союз молодёжи* (Union of the Youth) were published in А.А. Стригалева, "О выставочной деятельности петербургского общества художников 'Союз молодёжи'" (On the Exhibition Activities of the St. Petersburg Artists' Association 'Union of the Youth'), in *Волдемар Матвей и "Союз молодёжи"* (Voldemārs Matvejs and the Union of the Youth), (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 275–442.

14 "droši un ar pārliecību gleznota," Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, "III. Latviešu Mākslinieku izstāde" (3rd Exhibition of Latvian Artists), *Latvija* (Latvia), 1913, no. 289, December 14 (27.).



FIGURE 16.3 *Otilija Leščinska, Still Life with a Decanter, before 1917, oil on canvas, 86 × 70.6 cm*
PRIVATE COLLECTION, RIGA

According to her obituary, her paintings stayed in St. Petersburg although she had participated in local exhibitions in Latvia only, with anonymous submissions of works of applied art.¹⁵ Today only one of her works is known—the painting *Klusā daba ar karafi* (Still Life with a Decanter, fig. 16.3), in which she

15 K., “Otilija Leščinska †”, *Sieviete* (Woman), 1924, no. 2, 29–30.

depicts various volumes in space, thus demonstrating her interest in the lucidity of matter. Her signature on the work is written in Russian, and thus it can be dated back to the St. Petersburg period, before 1917. We do not know who her art teachers in St. Petersburg were and whose works she might have seen there, but the painting is recognizably rooted in the traditions of Cezannism and Russian Cubism, and close to the still lifes by Vasily Rozhdestvensky and Nathan Altman.

Another Latvian artist with Russian influences in her art is Lūcija Kuršinska (nee Driķe, 1894–1976). Kuršinska studied four years at the Riga City School of Art; during World War I she travelled as a refugee to St. Petersburg, where she attended the school of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts for a year and joined the Academy of Art in 1916. Her professor for the two years at the Academy was Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin. After the war she returned to Latvia, married the doctor, writer, and politician Andrejs Kurcijs, and gave birth to a daughter Latvija.

After a visit to Germany in 1921, she returned to art, and in her paintings we can see the influence of her teacher, Petrov-Vodkin. Paintings feature geometrical shapes; in the still lifes, diagonal rhythms are often found; the compositions become fluid, even turbulent; her color combinations are active—orange against blue, green against red. Kuršinska's works from this period are powerful and compelling; they are very much of the art scene of the time and resonate with the whole of Latvian Modernism (figs. 16.4, 16.5). During the latter half of the 1920s and 1930s, Kuršinska returned to more direct depictions of reality: portraits dominated in her art, and she became less active as a painter. But even during the most active period of her artistic creation, she did not exhibit her works, and her first exhibition came only during World War II.

Despite some earlier examples, the growth of Latvian modern art is largely associated with the end of the 1910s and the first half of the 1920s, a period we refer to as “Classical Modernism.” The main force of Latvian Modernism was the *Rīgas mākslinieku grupa* (Riga Artists' Group). Established in 1919, it was an organization of young artists, educated mostly in Russia, who were familiar with European modernist trends but, in their theoretical views and artistic practices, were mainly influenced by French modern art—Cubism, Fauvism, and Art Déco. Latvian artists transformed these styles professionally, convincingly and uniquely, to create a Latvian version of Modernism. Although there were only two women in the Riga Artists' Group—the sculptor Marta Liepiņa-Skulme and the painter Aleksandra Beļcova—they played an important role in it.



FIGURE 16.4
Lūcija Kuršinska, Girl with a Flower, early 1920s, oil on canvas, 120 × 80 cm
LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART,
RIGA



FIGURE 16.5 *Lūcija Kuršinska, Still Life with a Mask, 1920s, oil on canvas, 54 × 71 cm*
LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART, RIGA

Marta Liepiņa-Skulme (1890–1962) was the first Latvian woman to be trained professionally in sculpture. In 1913, she briefly attended evening classes at the Riga City School of Art, and soon transferred to the Kazan Art School in Russia, where she joined a class taught by sculptor Vasily Bogatyrev. In 1914, Liepiņa-Skulme moved to St. Petersburg and for several years attended evening classes in drawing and sculpture at the school of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts. Later she continued her training at the sculpture studio of Leonid Sherwood, which offered an atmosphere that was quite free and receptive to the latest developments of art. In 1918, Liepiņa-Skulme spent a brief time in Moscow with another sculptor, Pyotr Bromirsky. Upon returning to Latvia, she married the modernist painter and member of the Riga Artists' Group, Oto Skulme.

Marta Liepiņa-Skulme established her place in the modern art movement with the sculpture *Mana ģimene* (My Family, 1920). It is a smaller work, in wood, but its harsh directness and the laconic features of the faces speak of monumentality. Also apparent is an interest in African woodcarving approaches to the interplay of sculptural volumes and shapes.

The painter Aleksandra Beļcova (1892–1981) arrived in Latvia from Russia at about the same time. Beginning in 1912, Beļcova attended the art school in Penza. During the war, it provided a home to many future Latvian modernists, including Romans Suta (1896–1944), who became Beļcova's husband. After graduation from the Penza Art School in 1917, she spent the better part of the year at the Free State Art Studios (SVOMAS) in Petrograd, where she worked with the Russian avant-gardist Nathan Altman. In 1919, Beļcova moved to Riga and quickly became part of the local art life and participated in the activities and exhibitions of the newly established Riga Artists' Group.

One of their first activities together involved the decoration of a café owned by Suta's mother, which was called *Sukubs*, a name fusing two directions in contemporary Latvian art—"supremātisms" (Suprematism) and "kubisms" (Cubism). Beļcova and five other artists contributed decorative paintings to the walls of the café. The melding of Suprematism and Cubism, to which the name of the café referred, was also reflected in the café's interior. A bit later Beļcova painted three decorative panels to supplement the interior design of *Sukubs*. Employing the compositional principles of collage, Beļcova created an illusory arrangement of abstract planes constituting several layers of the painting; today these are recognized as icons of Latvian Classical Modernism. The café itself went down in history as a legendary meeting place for Bohemian members of the creative professions (fig. 16.6).

All of the young artists at that time hoped to become involved in the greater European world of art, and much was done in pursuit of this goal. Suta



FIGURE 16.6 Aleksandra Beļcova, Sukubs. Decorative Panel No. 2, 1922, oil on canvas, 62 × 85,5 cm
LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART, RIGA

published two articles in the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*, one in 1921 and the other in 1924, focusing on the latest developments in Latvian painting.¹⁶ In 1922 and 1923, nearly all of the members of the Riga Artists' Group, including Beļcova and Liepiņa-Skulme along with their husbands, set off on a study trip to Paris that included a stop in Berlin, where, in 1922, Aleksandra Beļcova and Romans Suta took part in the *Grosse futuristische Ausstellung*. In the spring of 1923, Beļcova and three other Latvian artists participated as exponents of the *Novembergruppe* in the annual *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung*. Finally, early in 1924, the Riga Artists' Group as a whole presented their Cubist artworks in the largest cities of neighboring Estonia—Tartu and Tallinn. This was the first major exhibition of Latvian art abroad, and several Estonian artists were joined in the exhibition.

In late 1924, the Riga Artists' Group welcomed to Riga for a joint exhibit a group of constructivist Polish artists that had organized themselves that spring

16 Roman Sutta, "L'Art en Lettonie: Le jeune école de peinture" (Art in Latvia: Young School of Painting), *L'Esprit Nouveau* (New Spirit), 1921, no. 10, 1165–1170; Sutta, "Lettonie," pages are not numbered.

under the name *Blok*. Before the exhibition, a special issue of the organization's journal, *Kurjer Bloku*, published an article by Romans Suta about the new Latvian art that included reproductions of the work of Beļcova, Liepiņa-Skulme, and others.¹⁷

Today we have only few reproductions of Marta Liepiņa-Skulme's work from this period—her so called constructive compositions. In them one finds a certain similarity to the compositional techniques of Jacques Lipchitz. The works are skillfully abstract in composition, with geometric shapes arranged on the surface, addressing the spectator mostly from a frontal position. Lipchitz and Amédée Ozenfant worked for the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*; during a visit to the journal's offices in Paris, Latvian sculptor Emīls Melderis (1889–1979) presented them with photographs of Liepiņa-Skulme's work as well as with the work of other members of the Riga Artists' Group (figs. 16.7, 16.8). Melderis wrote back to Latvia to report that the Parisians “had been impressed and delighted to learn that there was a woman in Latvia who was doing such bold work in sculpture.”¹⁸

Late in 1924, Romans Suta, Aleksandra Beļcova, and the graphic artist Sigismunds Vidbergs (1890–1970) established the *Baltars* porcelain-painting workshop,¹⁹ which existed only for a few years. The artists at the workshop created high quality hand-painted porcelain with a decor based on forms drawn from Latvian folk art, merging these elements with suggestions of innovative directions in art of the age (Cubism, Constructivism, *Art Déco*). Beļcova's porcelain ware shows iconic religious designs, ethnographic motifs from Slavic, Latvian, and even African nations, as well as everyday scenes (fig. 16.9). Lūcija Kuršinska also created a few sketches for plates. *Baltars* porcelain was widely praised and the artists received several medals at the *L'Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in 1925 in Paris.

The same year, Aleksandra Beļcova, Romans Suta, and Latvian painter Erasts Šveics (1895–1992) each contributed two artworks to the *L'Art d'Aujourd'hui* exhibition in Paris (fig. 16.10). Among the 80 exhibitors were distinguished artists such as Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Amédée Ozenfant, Jacques Lipchitz, Pablo Picasso, and others.

17 Romans Suta, “Nowa sztuka na Łotwie” (New Art in Latvia), *Blok: Kurjer Bloku* (Blok: Blok's Courier), 1924, no. 6–7, no page numbers.

18 Letter by Emīls Melderis to Oto Skulme, February 2, 1924, private collection. Quoted after Ruta Čaupova, “Every period of history...” in *Marta Liepiņa-Skulme* (Riga: Neputns, 2009), 77.

19 *Baltars* stands for the Latin “*ars Baltica*,” meaning “Baltic Art.”

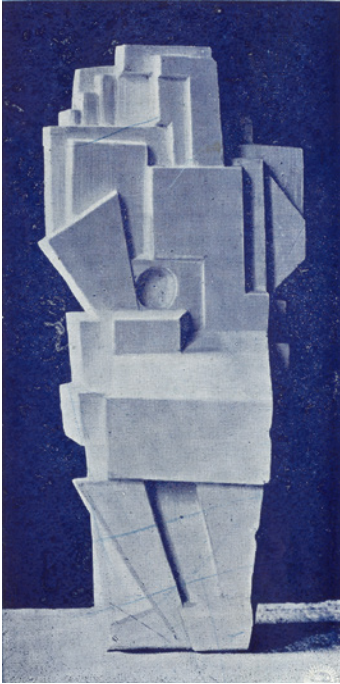


FIGURE 16.7
Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, Constructive Sculpture, early 1920s, destroyed, from Blok: Kurjer Bloku, 1924, No. 6–7

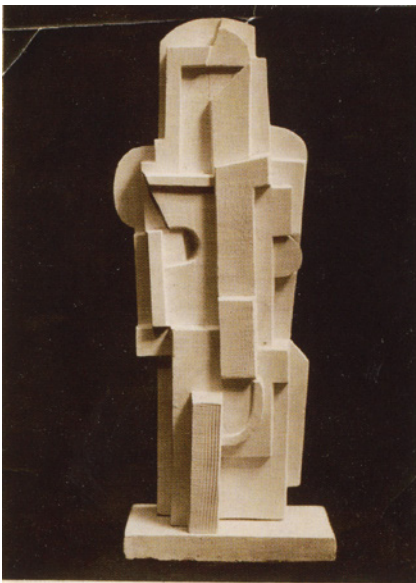


FIGURE 16.8 *Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, Constructive Sculptures, early 1920s, destroyed*
PHOTOGRAPH FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION, RIGA

The period of Classical Modernism in Latvian art history drew to a close during the latter half of the 1920s, when artists returned to more direct depictions of reality, with each developing his or her own approach. The sculptures produced by Marta Liepiņa-Skulme in the late 1920s and early 1930s are imbued with tectonic clarity, monumentality, and simplification. Aleksandra Beļcova, for her part, began to produce artwork with elements of *Art Déco* in the latter half of the 1920s and mostly painted portraits of emancipated, intelligent, and modern women. In her formal approach to one of the best works in her oeuvre—her painting *Baltā un melnā* (White and Black, 1925)—she employed techniques characteristic of Cubist art, but clearly and expressively modelled faces and figures of the sitters permit these works to be classified as examples of what is known as *Ingrism*.²⁰ Beļcova and Liepiņa-Skulme both went on to live through the Soviet occupation after World War II and the rejection of their own interwar work and experience with modernism during this period of strict Socialist Realism.



FIGURE 16.9 Aleksandra Beļcova, *Construction*, decorative plate, 1926, porcelain, overglaze painting, ø 24 cm
MUSEUM OF ROMANS SUTA AND ALEKSANDRA BEĻCOVA, RIGA

20 They reveal Neoclassical principles as employed by the French artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. See Natālija Jevsejeva, *Aleksandra Beļcova* (Riga: Neputns, 2014), 57.



FIGURE 16.10 *Aleksandra Beļcova, White and Black, 1925, oil on canvas, 100 × 120 cm*
LATVIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART, RIGA

Most of the mentioned Latvian modernist artists found little lasting success in the local and international art scenes. The exceptions were Aleksandra Beļcova and Marta Liepiņa-Skulme, who notably demonstrated that Latvian female artists were capable of convincing and noteworthy achievements; their art was included in major Latvian art exhibitions and publications of the period, and this remains true today.

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